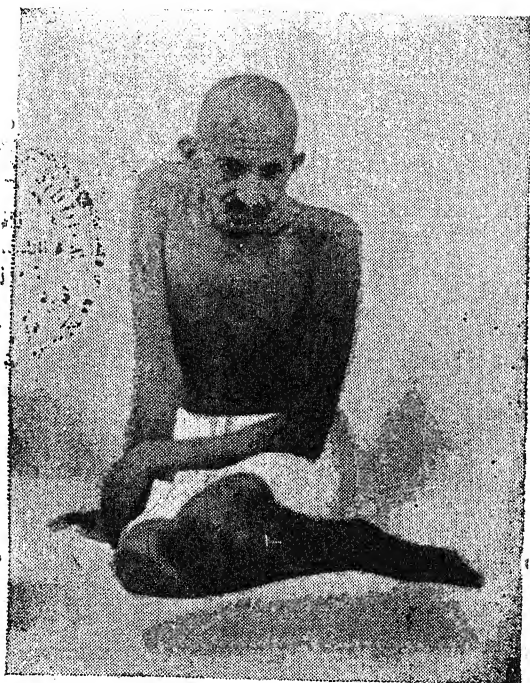


MAHATMA GANDHI



M. K. Gandhi.

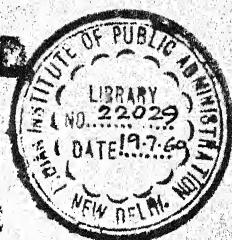
THE LIFE
OF
MAHATMA GANDHI

COMPUTERISED

BY

D. V. ATHALYE

AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF
LOKAMANYA TILAK:



SECOND EDITION

1926

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H. H. THE MAHARAJA OF NABHA

DEDICATED

TO

HIS HIGHNESS SHREE MAHARAJA
GURUCHARAN SINGHJI

MALAVENDRA BAHADUR

MAHARAJA OF NABHA

WHO IS

THE FIRST INDIAN PRINCE

WHO HAS SUFFERED FOR HIS VIRTUES
AND WHOSE INDOMITABLE COURAGE,
FIERY PATRIOTISM, RELIGIOUS FERVOUR

AND

HEROIC SUFFERINGS

HAVE MADE HIS EXALTED NAME
A HOUSEHOLD WORD THROUGHOUT
THE LENGTH AND BREADTH
OF THE MOTHER-LAND



PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

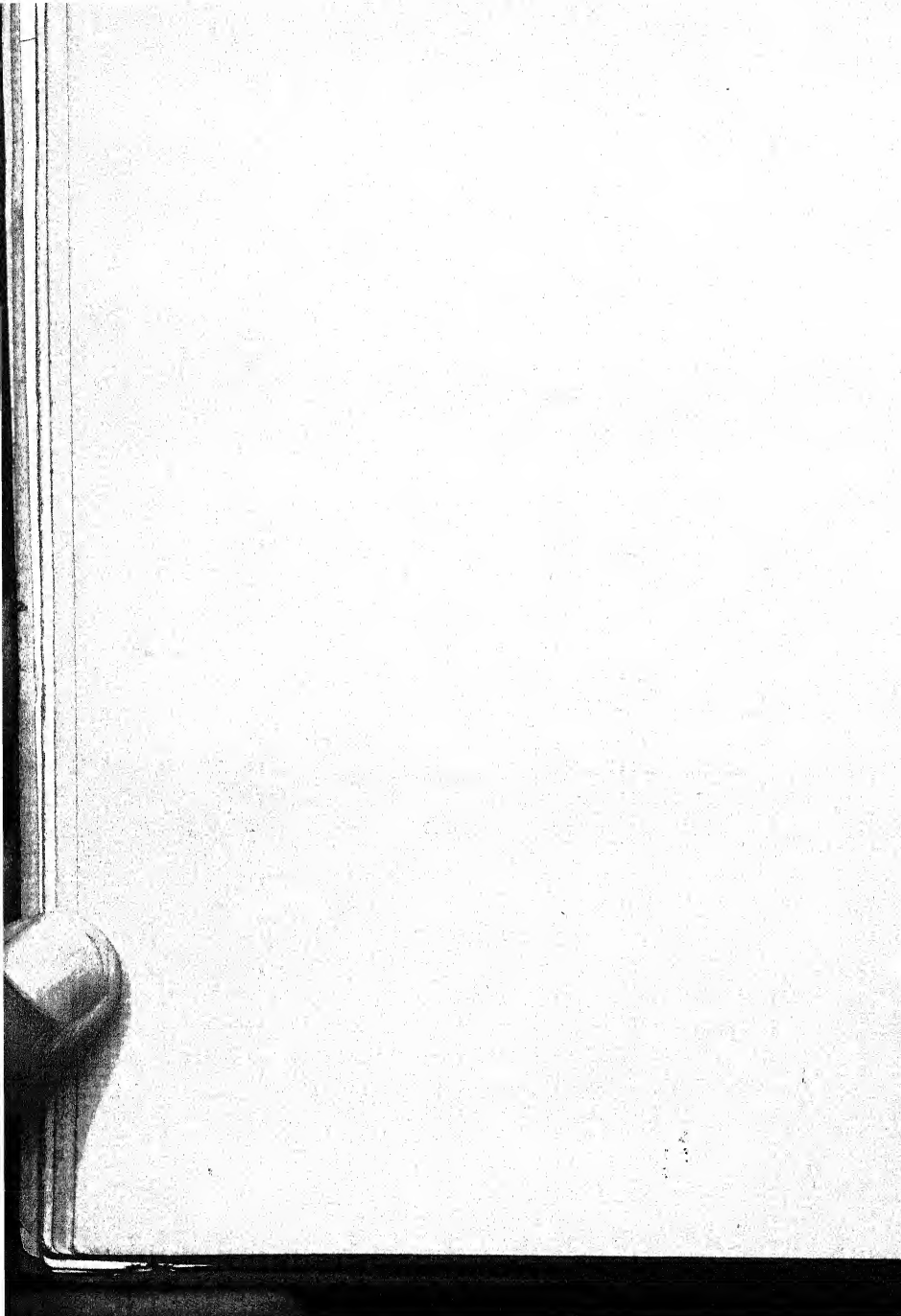
THE First Edition of the *Life of Mahatma Gandhi* was very favourably reviewed in the Press. In reviewing the book, *New India* edited by Dr. Annie Besant remarked "Mr. Athalye has done great service by collecting for the use of the future historian a mass of material and his treatment of the chapters dealing with the South African struggle is unique." In these days, when the South African problem is a live issue, these chapters will be of special interest to the reader.

The story of the great Satyagraha and Non-co-operation movements is told with equal fulness and the narrative has been brought right up to the Belgaum Congress.

D. V. ATHALYE

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MAHATMA GANDHI

CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG BARRISTER

WITHOUT possessing any of the arts or tricks of a demagogue Mahatma Gandhi, in the eventful months of 1921, wielded an influence over Indian Politics the memory of which, like that of the influence of Lokamanya Tilak, has become a national asset. The secret of this phenomenal influence lies, no doubt, in the singular combination of saintliness and heroism placed at the services of the political needs of the country, at a most critical period in its History. But this, at best, is a partial explanation. If we go deeper we shall find this wonderful influence, in a sense more the result of the freshness of the personality and the universality of the message. Neither the personality of the man nor his message has any provincial tinge. It would be difficult to name a single modern Indian leader who stands apart from his province, caste or creed. We cannot think of Lokamanya Tilak without the historical traditions of the great Marahatta race; we cannot picture

Lala Lajpat Rai without the setting of the virile Arya Samaj. But the same cannot be said of Mahatma Gandhi. Though a Hindu, he is equally at home with Mahomedans and Christians. Excepting the language, he has as much in common with the Gujaratis as with the sons of Madras and Bengal. He combines in himself the keen analytical faculty of the Madrassite, the emotion of the Bengalee, the intrepidity of the Mahratta, the directness and candour of the Sikh, and the precision and tactfulness of a son of Gujarat. He is one of those great men who belong to no age, to no country. It is the lot of such universal men either to be utterly neglected or to be literally worshipped. Far away in the seclusion of South Africa it fell to the lot of this man to lead to victory a small but heroic band of Hindus and Moslems. We have learnt to our cost how the victory was short-lived. But victory or no victory, Mahatma Gandhi was successful, in that he found himself. His ideals, character, personality, message, were all formed and perfected outside India. That is one reason of the universality of the man and of his message. We are literally thankful to General Smuts and to the White Colonists of the African Union for having moulded our hero in the veldts of that sub-continent, and we shall willingly forgive all the harassments and persecutions to which the British Dominions subject our brethren, if every one of them undertakes to give us one Gandhi in exchange. The life-story of such a man cannot but be of absorbing interest to his countrymen. True, the time is not yet and the materials available are extremely meagre. Still it is worthwhile to attempt a picture howsoever imperfect.

Both the father and grand-father of Mahatma Gandhi were extremely capable and enterprising men, who, had their lot so permitted, would have distinguished themselves by work on a wider field. Uttamchand, the grandfather of Mohandas, owed nothing to birth or circumstances. But his resourcefulness was wonderful; his powers of organization creditable; and with the help of these rare qualities, he rose from the lowest ring of the ladder to enviable post of the Dewan of Porbandar. He had the inflexible will of his illustrious grandson, which, when coupled with integrity of purpose and kindness of nature, forms the most fascinating element of character. He was bold, chivalrous and loyal. Half of his substantial salary was regularly spent in charity towards Sadhus and with what remained, he supported his large family. It will thus be seen that he had very little in common with other courtiers who could not contemplate with equanimity his meteoric rise. Had the ability and integrity of Uttamchand been a jot less than what it was, he would surely have been the victim of malice and intrigue. But the Ranasahiba of Porbandar who, though not a man of active habits, was shrewd in judgment, had enough perception to keep the enemies of Uttamchand at an arm's length. They therefore patiently waited for their opportunity. After the death of the Ranasahib, they instantly surrounded Rupaliba, the Queen-Regent, and continued their machinations under more favourable auspices. When the angle of vision is changed, opportunities are always handy for persecution. An innocent storekeeper happened to incur her displeasure. Finding his head in danger, the terrified

man ran to Uttamchand for protection. Uttamchand kept him concealed in his house, trusting that the storm would soon blow over. The news got wind. The Queen-Regent called Uttamchand and peremptorily ordered him to hand over her victim. Uttamchand protested. The Queen persisted. But Uttamchand was not the man to be frightened into surrender. He declared he had promised protection to the man and not even the prospect of losing his own head would induce him to go back on his plighted word. This was the long-awaited opportunity for his opponents. By skilful machinations worthy of a better cause, they transferred the wrath of the Queen-Regent from the storekeeper to the Dewan. Uttamchand's house was bombarded. He fled away safely. Crossing the Barda Hills, he reached Junagadh where he was warmly received by the Nabob who would willingly have availed himself of the services of so capable a Minister. But Uttamchand, still loyal to his ungrateful master, not only did not entertain the kind offer, but did not so much as salute the Nabob of Junagadh with his right hand. "That hand," he said, "was still the property of Porbandar; he could salute other Princes only with the hand that remained to him." This gratified the Nabob of Junagadh immensely. "I shall give half my kingdom," he said, "to get a minister like you." Through his good offices, Uttamchand was recalled to Porbandar. But the unpleasant incident had sunk deep into the heart of the disgraced Minister. Unwilling to continue in service, he recommended his fifth son Karamchand to the post.

When Karamchand, the father of our hero, accepted the responsibilities and dangers of a Dewan's post, he

was only 25 years' old. But being trained to the work by his father and gifted with the same capacity, enterprise and integrity, he successfully discharged his duties for about twenty-five years. This stern and unbending man brooked no interference in the work once entrusted to him. At the first signal of displeasure, he resigned his service with its salary of nearly Rs. 700 per mensem and repaired to Rajkot where he found immediate employment with the Thakoresahib. Some time later, the Chief of Wankaner, desirous of organising the affairs of his state, requested the Thakoresahib of Rajkot to send Karamchand to him. The offer was accepted but Karamchand insisted upon one condition—perfect freedom in the management of the departments. It was agreed that, if Karamchand was compelled to break his five years' contract of service on account of interference from above, he was entitled to full five years' salary. But such was his disinterestedness that though he had to quickly quit Wankaner service and revert to his post at Rajkot after a couple of months, he did not accept the many thousands that were, by way of the stipulated indemnity, offered to him.

His last wife bore him one daughter and three sons Laxmidas, Karsandas and the youngest Mohandas. Mohandas was born at Porbandar on October 2nd 1869. When Mohandas was about seven years' old, his father left the Porbandar-State-service and repaired to Rajkot, where Mohan received part of his elementary and the whole of his secondary education. As a boy Mohan was very kind, very playful and very obstinate. Impulsive and capricious though he was, he won the affection of all by the sweetness of his nature. He

never neglected his studies nor required pilots to steer his course. But his restless nature never allowed him to remain buried in his books. He loved all the boyish sports and pranks. Naughty but dutiful, he was the pride of his parents and when barely twelve years' old was married to Kasturbai, daughter of a Porbandar merchant.

The school-life of young Mohan was uneventful except for one episode. Who will believe that the fervent apostle of *Ahimsa* was, when a boy, tempted for a few days to taste of meat? And yet such is the fact recorded on the testimony of Gandhi himself. There have been great men who have never, even once erred in their lives and who ever since they drew the first breath, have consciously or unconsciously, been drawn to the fulfilment of their noble destiny. Such a man was Ramdas who, when but a boy, left his bride and repaired to the forests to practise *tapasya*; or Dnyaneshwar whose life-long miseries sweetened and sweetened his outlook and tested and tested his spiritual strength. We worship such men from a distance! We feel the reverence of divinity for them! They are just like Euclid's line! They are the ideals embodied! We read their lives and despair! More useful to ordinary men and women, are the lives of those who *have* erred and have timely repaired the errors. There have been hundreds of well-educated Indians who have more or less been accustomed to animal food at some period or other of their lives. Nobody takes serious note of their lapses; it is only on a white piece of cloth that the smallest speck is seen. It is because Gandhi has become a Mahatma that we notice the errors of his boyhood.

But how was he tempted to 'break his caste' in this most reckless manner? His violation of the traditional vegetarianism of an orthodox Hindu was only the culmination of a process of demoralisation which began with the coming of agnosticism. At the tender age of 13, Mohandas, brought up in the best surroundings, the son of pious parents, capitulated before the shafts of atheism! The incident, not an unusual one, shows how utterly useless is the protective wirenetting of domestic surroundings when the dawning intellect is no longer satisfied with the toys of superstition. Every mind worth the name must, at some time or other, the sooner the better, be awakened to the eternal problem of creation and must put itself the eternal questions of the why and the wherefore. The Western Civilization, by encouraging pronouncedly intellectual leanings and strangling the voice of the heart, has only intensified the struggle. It is no wonder that such questions began to find their way into the mind of Mohan. Who would answer them? Not his father, nor his mother. To them the very raising of such questions was blasphemy; and in the partial mental isolation that ensued, Mohan had to shift for himself. "There was no alternative," says he, referring to this period of his youth, "so far as I knew, between idolatrous Hinduism and atheism. So atheism it was" to him and to several of his companions.

Cut off from the moorings of religion by the premature awakening of his analytical faculty and drawn by his social instincts into the company of some questionable characters, young Mohan began to pass from one apostasy to another. Such a path is always slippery

and perilous. At last a point was reached where even the hardihood of these young apostates for a time failed them. Having broken one custom after another they began to revel in their fall and dare more and more "Should they take meat"? Was the question that began to be mooted. "And why not"? was the answer. In their childish simplicity or folly they imagined that the superior physique of the English was due to their animal food. Such was the perverted mental outlook of the first two generations of English-educated Indians that we need not blame these inexperienced lads for their foolish ideas and more culpable practices, when we know that several elders have been guilty of similar breaches. In the early sixties, there was a regular body of so-call Reformers in Bombay that met weekly or biweekly for the sole and solemn purpose of breaking through vegetarian habits. In this particular instance the pace of Mohan's lapses might have been accelerated by vague projects of ambition and foreign travel. Describing the episode almost in the words of Gandhi, the Rev. Mr. Doke writes :—

"The little company of the atheistic students to whom Mohandas was attached broke secretly though one Hindu custom after another, growing more and more daring. They gave up worship. They smiled at the gods. They at length began surreptitiously to eat meat. Their leader persuaded them that the strength and physique of the English were due to this indulgence. A Mahomedan friend, who at this time began to exercise a powerful influence over them, added his persuasions. Finally they discovered that the schoolmaster who was venerated by them indulged

in this food and before such successive assaults the instinct of years gave way. For some time they met and discussed the awful theme, afraid of taking such a course. At last they ventured. A party of five or six more reckless spirits stole away one evening to a secluded spot by the riverside carrying meat with them and there, under the supervision of the school master's brother, it was solemnly cooked. But when the moment came, which should break their caste and cause a breach with all the sacred traditions of their faith, they felt like a company of murderers. The meat was quickly eaten. At first, it tasted nauseous but worse of all, the memory of it haunted the darkness of the night and there was no sleep for the sinners. Day after day they repeated the act until the fear wore away and they even began to like the forbidden food.

We have no wish to skip over this episode. In the first place, it has been actually described by the Mahatma himself with his usual truthfulness; moreover it is from this little incident that the real awakening of Gandhi began. There is no knowing how deeper he would have gone down, had he not been saved by his innate love of truth. Ever since his childhood, Mohandas was distinguished for his passionate love of truth. Once he had been a party in the secret sale of one of his own gold ornaments. But when the time came of satisfying the palate out of the proceeds of the sale, he repented and straightway repaired to his father and with tears in his eyes confessed, unsolicited, his guilt. Similarly on this occasion, he felt all the mortification and torture of concealment and dissimulation. Every day he had to take his mother's permission for going

out. What reason was he to assign? Why was he so late in returning home? Why had he no appetite? He might have persisted in his meat-eating trips but it seemed intolerable to him to continue his course. So he gave up his practice, gave up his companions and returned to the normal course of life.

The significance of these meat-eating expeditions in the upbuilding of Gandhi's character is very great. It is just possible that the remembrance of this unhappy episode has coloured his views about the whole creation and is responsible for his extreme views on *Ahimsa*. A great soul, temporarily fallen, feels such a loathing for the particular sin committed, that it runs to the opposite extreme. Whatever it may be, one thing is certain. Gandhi's strong views on the utter futility of Western Education in India are the direct outcome of his own experience. When he, a good lad, had, even in spite of the purity of his domestic surroundings, been led into unpardonable lapses, we can well understand why he is so hard on the English system of improving the brains of Indian boys at the expense of their hearts. Fortunately for Mohan, soon after passing his Matriculation he went to London and thus escaped the evil influence of his early companions. He thus not only got a good start in life but escaped further corruption from the continued companionship of those who had not the same moral recuperative power.

Before Gandhi passed his Matriculation Examination in 1887 from the Kathiawar High School, his father had died (about 1884) at the ripe age of 63. Having received, at Mohan's marriage, a fall from a horse-carriage, Karamchand was confined to bed ever since

During his continued illness, Mohandas was always by his side. Fistula-in-ano, from which the old man was suffering, is a particularly loathsome disease and it tested to the utmost Mohan's readiness to render personal services. And here, we might say, was developed Gandhi's love of nursing patients— a characteristic which he retains even to this day. It was the heartfelt wish of Karamchand to be able to witness the completion of Mohan's education, and to get him suitably employed in some progressive Indian State. But Destiny had reserved for Mohandas a long career in South Africa where his father's influence had no place.

After the death of his father, Mohandas lived almost wholly under the influence of his mother Putribai. She was a woman in a thousand, Stern in discipline, she was the image of love and tenderness. Young though she was, she despised ornaments and was always dressed in a simple way and by choice. The sight of misery and starvation would draw tears from her eyes. She was always ready to help the poor and the needy. Destitute of any academical training, she was wise beyond her years. She had taken to life very seriously"; and after the death of her husband most of her time was spent in religious practices. On occasions, she fasted for days together. Becharswami, a learned Jain teacher was her spiritual guide; and if she still lived in the world, it was solely for the sake of her children.

On getting through the Matriculation, Mohandas duly joined the Samaldas College, Bhavnagar. But the dreams of going to England, that had vaguely attended his thoughts during the meat-eating excursions, began to take hold of his imagination more and more.

One day he met a Rajkot friend who had recently returned from England, after having been called to the bar. He was emphatically of opinion that the easiest way Mohandas could distinguish himself was by becoming a barrister. Mohandas consulted his friend Kevlarambhai, a pleader at Rajkot, who too enthusiastically supported the idea. The money difficulty—the generosity and integrity of his father had kept him comparatively poor—was solved by the generosity of his brother Laxmidas, who raised the required amount of nearly ten thousand Rupees by debt and by sale of the family ornaments. Mohandas had expected that Sir F. S. A. Laly, the British Administrator at Porbandar, who had a very high regard for Karmchand, would use his influence in securing for him a State scholarship. But the Administrator refusing at that stage to help him, Mohandas had to fall back on his own resources.

The last but not the least difficulty now remained to be met. How was the consent of the mother to be got? How could she sanction a project that would send her dearest son to a country six thousand miles away, without friend or relation to look after him, in unfamiliar and perhaps uncongenial surroundings? Mohandas had to use all his powers of persuasion. But even then he could convince only her head and not her heart. In her difficulty she consulted Becharswami, her spiritual guide. He at once advised her to bless her son's ambition, provided Mohandas would take the vow of abstaining, when in England, from flesh, wine and woman. The vow was taken with all the necessary formalities and Mohandas was allowed to embark on his voyage, (Sept, 1888)

When Mohandas started on his venture, he was hardly twenty, and impulsive that he was, he had failed to arm himself in advance with all the knowledge and information that would have saved him from initial difficulties. The result was that when landed in England he did not know where to go and what to do. His very flannel dress—the most becoming one, according to him—made him, in a sense not very complimentary to him, the “observed of all observers.” In his perplexity he drove up to the hotel Victoria but felt dreadfully lonely. At last he sent a telegram to one of his friends then in London. With the coming of that friend, Mohandas’ difficulties were at an end. There could be no two characters so radically different as Mohandas and his friend. While our hero had gone to England, fettered by the triple oath, this gentleman had taken to English ways with all the zest of a young novice. He laughed at Mohandas’ ignorance and announced his intention of making an “English gentleman” of him. He taught him the details of English etiquette. He arranged for him lessons in French. But these were not quite enough for “polite” society. “Unless you learn music and dancing, you have no place in English society.” Mohandas had some taste for Indian music but this foreign music entirely scared him away. A violin was purchased to cultivate his ear; but “it cultivated only disappointment” and was soon laid aside.

Thus far Gandhi was prepared to follow his friend. But on the food question, he would brook no compromise, “I have pledged my word,” said he, “and I must keep it.” This irritated the friend. An oath! you duffer! said he, “you had no business to come under an oath!

just taste it and you will find out how nice and dainty meat is." Gandhi's nature knew no concealment. "I have tasted meat" he said, "but I know it was an error, and now I have given it up." No pressure could induce him to relax his vows. His friends resolved to "surprise him into laxity" at a dinner party at the Holborn Restaurant. But Gandhi was firm as a rock. Describing the experience he says "When the first course came, I summoned the waiter and inquired what soup was made of. My host saw the movement and leaned across the table to ask what it meant. When I told him, he said passionately "You are not fit for decent society; if you cannot act like a gentleman, you had better go! So I went."

Fortunately, it was not the will of Providence to make an "English gentleman" of Gandhi. We are all thankful that he remained an Indian gentleman. His better nature soon saw how deceptive the ideal of an "English gentleman" was; and he resolved to shake off all temptations and lead a very austere and economical life. He sold off his violin and investing in a stove, succeeded by dint of rigid economy, in reducing his monthly expenditure to £4. He was studying for the bar at the Inner Temple. He worked hard; nor was Law the only subject he read. He also seized every opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of well educated and thinking Englishmen. He joined a Vegetarian Society and busied himself with propaganda work. Though he gave up violin he did not neglect elocution. After three years' study he was called to the Bar in 1892. Immediately, he returned home.

There is only one phase of Gandhi's life in London we have now to discuss; it was his researches into religion. His boyish atheism was more the result of a rebel's desire to break through old bonds than the deep discontent of a severely thinking mind. It was merely a thin crust that had gathered over his essentially religious mind. Probably his religious instinct required a shock before it was aroused; and once this impulse was received, the Godward quest started, never to be stopped. His is the mind that seeks to realize the Infinite not by the tortuous and fatiguing path of the soaring intellect. His is the religion, not of the head but of the heart. Truths, as he often says, are to be realized with a heart-grasp instead of a head-grasp. His search of the Infinite commenced with the search of and love for the beautiful and the good. His is the artistic mind. But the artist in him seeks more the beauty and harmonies of emotions than of landscapes. He had dived sufficiently deep into atheism and found it vulgar; nor beauty nor joy could he discover in the denial of God and of the supreme law. Dr. Oldfield, who sympathised with the religious longings of Gandhi, suggested "why not accept Christianity," Gandhi proudly replied- "I don't care to study Christianity before I study my own religion." The desire to study Hinduism was quickened by two Theosophical friends who expressed a wish to read the Gita with him. The request was granted; and in order to explain the subtle meaning of several verses, Gandhi had to carefully read the book beforehand. The result was marvellous. "The Gita opened to me a new view of life," said he, "It touched my life as perhaps it can only touch a child of the East. I

had found, at last, as I believed the light I needed." The sublime melody of the Gita charmed him. Atheism was forever banished and his religious life commenced.

Mr. Mazmudar of Ahmedabad, Mr. Shukla of Rajkot and Dr. P. J. Mehta of Rangoon were Gandhi's companions in England.

Most of those who have been companions of Gandhi's boyhood and youth evince a mild surprise at the height of greatness attained by him, a height they had never expected him to occupy. The reason is not far to seek. The greatness of Gandhi is built on the greatness of the heart; and in its early manifestations the greatness of the heart does not so much impress people as the keenness of brain. Even at 20, Gandhi had developed many of those unique qualities that have marked him off as a man amongst men. His utter truthfulness his suave nature, his iron will, his intellectual intrepidity, his devotion, his faithfulness, his enthusiasm his eagerness to avail of any opportunity of rendering personal service to others—all these precious qualities were noted, no doubt; but his companions never stopped to think that properly developed, they meant heroism and even saintliness. His truthfulness was perhaps regarded as the effect of his simplicity and ingorance of the ways of the world. His austerity and purity earned for him the name of "straight-laced" from his London friends. His vegetarianism was regarded as a fad. Every one, however,—Englishman or Indian—unreservedly recognised the essential sweetness of his heart, of his capacity for loving and being loved. If any character has been consistently developed, it is his. He did not stumble into greatness.

The joy of his home-coming was unexpectedly turned into boundless grief. His mother died while he was in London, and his relations, anxious to spare him, had kept the news from him. She, whom he was so eager to meet and tell his London experiences and especially the vow that had been religiously administered and faithfully kept amidst innumerable temptations, she, who, with joy and pride, would have acclaimed his success--was no more! It is thus that jealous Fate sours joy with drugs of misery. In the triumph of our proudest moments, we are stricken with bitterest grief!

CHAPTER II

IN THE LAND OF DIAMONDS

Oh, my friends, there are resources in us on which we have not drawn. There are men, who rise refreshed on hearing a threat; men, to whom a crisis, which intimidates and paralyzes the majority, comes graceful and beloved as a bride. Napoleon said to Massena, that he was not himself until the battle began to go against him; then, when the dead began to fall in ranks around him, awoke his powers of combination, and he put on terror and victory as a robe. So it is in rugged crises, in unweariable endurance, and in aims which put sympathy out of question, that the angel is shown.

Emerson.

WHEN Gandhi returned from England, the whole of India, with the exception of a very few provinces, was, in one sense, almost a benighted country. The masses were inert and apathetic, the classes, still under the hypnotic spell of Western Education, and Western Materialism. The greatest misfortune, from the standpoint of the younger generation, was the total absence of high national traditions and the dearth of dynamic leadership. In Maharashtra, the missionary zeal of Ranade, the stern independence of Mandlik and heroic sacrifices of Vishnushastri, had created a stir in the

minds of the younger generation and called forth, as we have seen in the Life of Lokamanya Tilak, all the enthusiasm of Tilak, Agarkar and many others. With their eyes fixed on these great leaders, the younger generation could interpret all passing events and properly assimilate the lessons they imparted. The first difficulty of an awakening nation is the lack of pioneer leaders. Once such leaders come, the tradition of National life is formed and then everything is comparatively easy. When Gandhi, full of buoyancy and enthusiasm started his career, Gujarat has no outstanding personality to boast of. The seed of politics was hardly taking root. A few enthusiasts—Mahipatram Rupram, Lalshankar Umiyashankar, Karsandas Mulji—mostly Government servants, were dabbling in Social Reform. The religious reformers fared no better and their chief exploit, the Prarthna Samaj (Ahmedabad) hardly counted more than a score votaries. The only field where some beginning was really made was Literature. But even here, the record now interests us chiefly by its potentialities rather than by its actual achievements. In poetry, the fervid eloquence of Narmada Shankar and the mellow splendour of Dalpatram did indeed attract attention. But neither in poetry nor in prose were there more than a dozen writers of enduring fame; and while the blossom of Gujarati Literature was giving promise of a substantial yield of fine fruit, Western Industrialism caught hold of the national intellect and dried the fountain of creative literature. The first smoky chimney was erected in Ahmedabad by Ranchhodlal Chhotlal in the early seventies; and after many failures and a few successes

enterprising industrialists of Gujarat found the art of conducting mills as easy as that of conducting a shop. So, since 1890 till 1915, the stream of Gujarati enterprise and Gujarati intellect has been chiefly directed to organizing and developing the cotton industry. Who cared for Politics when lakhs and crores were easily amassed? "Politics is a poor man's business." Who recked of Literature? Let alone Social Reform. Let us make ourselves and thereby our country rich, That is Politics; that is Literature; that is Social Reform. Such was the outlook of Gujarat in 1892.

We can now understand what a great void Gandhi must have felt at this circumstance, with what eagerness and expectancy, he wandered (1896) all over India in search of a hero till at last he found and clung to Gokhale "as a child clings to its mother's breast." Brimful of enthusiasm, with the vague ambition of doing something great, he—an idle and briefless barrister at Bombay, could not find any congenial occupation that would suit his intellectual and emotional cravings. When he left Bombay and settled at Rajkot, he got a good number of clients no doubt; but there was nothing stimulating about the whole affair. He still longed for something he knew not what. It was probably this circumstance that induced him to accept, though somewhat reluctantly, the offer of Dada Abdulla, a wealthy Memon merchant of Porbandar having a branch office in the Transvaal, and after eighteen months' stay at Bombay and Rajkot, Gandhi started on his one year's legal mission to Pretoria.

When we remember what a dismal ignorance the majority of average Indians betrayed with regard to

the South African question even in the early years of this century before the historic visit (1909) of Mr. Polak, we need not be surprised that Gandhi, when he started for Durban *en route* to Pretoria, had no idea whatsoever of the hardships which he would be called upon to bear, and about which his clients, anxious to secure his services, had maintained a discreet silence. He had excepted all honey and no stings. Nor was his idealism very much suited for his temporary land of adoption. Though not yet quite politically minded, he was a patriot in his own way. Though dressed in English fashion he had preserved his recently adopted head-gear,—the “Ramanbhai Cap” (as it is popularly called)—which on entering the court he did not remove. The judge was angry and ordered it to be removed. Gandhi refused and had to leave the court on that account. Subsequently the African Courts were reconciled to the use of the cap.

This was only the beginning. Gandhi did not then know what a deep root colour-prejudice had taken in the minds of the Colonial Whites. They hated all physical work and for the cultivation of the land and the development of the resources of the country required the “cooly”. It was at the persistent request of the Natal Government, that the Government of India allowed (1860) indentured labour to emigrate to the country. When Gandhi went to South Africa, Natal had an Indian population of about 50,000, of whom about 16,000 people were serving their indenture, about 30,000 were ex-indentured persons who had settled in the Colony as free persons and about 5,000 persons belonging to the trading community, who had followed

the 'coolies' to cater for their needs. Slowly this trading element began to cater for the needs of the haffir and the poor European also. Their industry, thrift, contentment and uprightness created for them a very good clientele and brought for them the enmity of the white traders. Trade jealousies, race arrogance, colour-prejudices and the insolence of power, acting and interacting, had the inevitable effect, and the history of the Indians in South Africa has been the history of a bitter and almost ineffectual struggle of men stung to the quick by the persecutions of those who, even after grabbing the diamonds and gold of South Africa, were unwilling to allow the Indian traders to collect a little silver dust by the sweat of their brows.

The British Empire so called (the United Kingdom and her infant colonies)—is an Empire of the Whites, for the exploitation of the resources of the backward nationalities of the world and if India is allowed to call herself a member and a partner of the same, we should be content with the courtesy of the title and must never seriously seek to claim the privileges that logically follow. The fortune and misfortune of Gandhi was that he took the English statesmen at their word and insisted upon an ocular proof—howsoever modest—of the theory of equality and partnership. Three years' life in London had put English democratic ideas into his head and his eighteen months' stay in India was too short to accustom him to all the humiliations and privations that fall to the lot of subject people. It was, therefore, quite natural that he should raise his head and voice against the inequities he experienced in South Africa.

It is really remarkable that it is social inequalities more than even the political disabilities that cause the greatest irritation. Differential treatment in hotels, restaurants and on railways, tramcars and footpaths, has created, in South Africa, even more bitterness than the denial of political franchise and the restriction—almost synonymous with prohibition—of immigration. When Gandhi, on his way to Pretoria, boarded a night train at Pietermaritzburg, he, though a holder of a first class ticket, was rudely ordered by another passenger to “come out and go into the van compartment.” He refused, the guard was called, the order was repeated and when Gandhi naturally persisted in his refusal he was forcibly ejected with the aid of a police constable. The train steamed off and Gandhi was left to shiver in the cold of the night.

His black skin was a handicap everywhere. When the next day, he commenced his coach journey for Pretoria,—the train could take him only as far as Charlestown,—at Paardeburg, Gandhi, who was seated just near the guard, was ordered—it was always an order and never a request where a “coolie” was concerned—by a fellow-passenger to vacate his berth and sit elsewhere. Again Gandhi refused. His refusal brought him not ejection this time but a bloody blow. Gandhi neither retaliated nor vacated his place. Unfortunately for the burly Dutchman, other passengers interfered, took Gandhi's side and so Gandhi was left unmolested and the journey was eventually over without any further harassments.

At Johannesburg he was not admitted to the Grand National Hotel. There was “no room” for him there.

At Pretoria he was kicked off the footpath by a sentry. Within a brief fortnight he learnt, by actual suffering, more of the condition of his countrymen in South Africa than he could have done by any other means.

Such scenes were painful enough. But they never cowed him down. They never embittered him. Already, in thought and spirit he belonged to the Tolstoyan school and refused to seek redress by appeals to courts of law, even when the invocation of the protection of law was likely to be fruitful.

Naturally, he did not take to these things kindly. He blamed his clients for keeping all such possibilities from his knowledge at the time they engaged him. But he had given his word and come what may, he would keep it.

At Pretoria, he passed his time very pleasantly. The law-suit, the progress of which he had to watch and in which he had practically to do the work of an interpreter, did not take much of his time; and through the solicitors of his clients, he was introduced to the cultured society of Pretoria. He had plenty of books and during the leisure of nearly one year he read "quite eighty" books. For the first time he studied the Bible; he also "attended Bible classes conducted by a prominent solicitor." Nor did he neglect his own religion and a deeper study of the philosophy which forms its background. Tolstoy, of course, was inevitable. Altogether it was a very pleasant year and the few unpleasant incidents rather increased the sum-total of his happiness.

Had Gandhi left South Africa at the end of his stipulated period of one year, the tremendous moral and

spiritual benefit he derived from the struggle of which he was the unquestioned leader from the very beginning would have been lost. We should have certainly found him working for a number of years under the direction of (the Hon. Sir) Dinshaw Wacha and (Sir) Pheroze-shah Mehta ; the Congress would have got an energetic and enthusiastic under-secretary and the Bombay bar would have got one more capable lawyer. But the South African struggle would have missed its splendour and heroism. We could still have got Mr. Gandhi but the Mahatma would nowhere have been found.

Fortunately that was not to be ; and so, almost on the eve of his retirement from South Africa, when he found that the Natal Government was about to introduce the Asiatics' Exclusion Bill, he warned his countrymen of the impending danger and advised them to get the bill rejected. The Indians were alarmed and were extremely anxious to resist the passage of the bill ; but this they could do only with the help of a trusted and capable leader. Gandhi was the man. Only he could organize their opposition ; and so ultimately Gandhi was induced to prolong his stay in South Africa and live in Natal for a few years.

"Till 1894, Indians had been enjoying the franchise equally with the Europeans, under the general Franchise law of the Colony (Natal) which entitles any adult male, being a British subject, to be placed on the voters list, who possesses immovable property worth £50 or pays an annual rent of £10." There were in Natal only 250 such voters from the Indian community as against nearly 10,000 European voters. And now an attempt was made to take away on racial grounds

even this franchise. Gandhi drew up a petition, "forcibly, moderately & well." It was widely circulated and commented upon. A Deputation was also organised. In spite of some opposition, the bill was successfully carried through the local Parliament. The struggle had therefore to be carried right up to the Colonial Office at White-Hall. A petition signed by ten thousand signatories was forwarded to the Colonial Secretary, requesting him to recommend Her Majesty the Queen to veto the measure. The *Times* strongly supported the Indian case; and a favourable combination of circumstances gladdened the hearts of Natal Indians; for the Asiatics' Exclusion Act was ultimately vetoed by the Queen.

The keen-witted Colonists, however, persisted in their endeavours and taking advantage of a change at the Colonial Office, they brought forward another bill which, instead of seeking to disfranchise Indians by name, aimed at reaching the same goal by a round-about way. As proposed by the bill, "no natives of countries (not of European origin), which have not hitherto possessed elective representative institutions founded on Parliamentary franchise, shall be placed on the voters' roll unless they shall first obtain an exemption from the Governor-in-Council." Indians might claim that they have or had representative institutions. But as the power of admitting or rejecting the Indian claim rested in the hands of unsympathetic Colonials Indians could only expect to assert their rights by "endless litigation and expense." They, therefore, again opposed the bill, tooth and nail, but their opposition notwithstanding, the bill was successfully carried and this time it received the Royal sanction.

The object of these measures could not be political; for, obviously there was no danger of the Indians swamping the European voters. It was devised solely to "degrade the Indians" and, to use the words of a member of Natal Parliament, "to make the Indians' life more comfortable in his land than in Natal." At all costs, the Indians had to be "prevented from forming part of the future South African nation that is going to be built. Not content therefore merely with disfranchising Indians, the Natal legislators proceeded to (1895) amend the Indian Immigration Law. The bill was carried; the Royal sanction also was duly received (1896) in spite of Gandhi's attempts. "Up to the 18th of August 1894, the indentured immigrants went under a contract of service for five years in consideration for a free passage to Natal, free board and lodging for themselves and their families and wages at the rate of 10s. per month for the first year, to be increased by one shilling every following year. They were also entitled to a free passage back to India, if they remained in the Colony another five years as free labourers." By the amending bill, however, "the immigrants would have either to remain in the Colony for ever under indenture, their wages increasing to 20s. at the end of the 9th year of indentured service or return to India or to pay an annual poll-tax of £3, equivalent nearly to half-a-year's earnings on the indenture scale."

How monstrous the bill was can be seen by the following candid remarks made in 1885 by the same Attorney-General, who introduced it in 1895:—

"With reference to time-expired Indians, I do not think that it ought to be compulsory on any man to go

to any part of the world save for a crime for which he is transported. I hear a great deal of this question. I have been asked again and again to take a different view, but I have not been able to do it. A man is brought here, in theory with his own consent, in practice, very often without his consent; he gives the best five years of his life; he forms new ties, forgets the old ones, perhaps establishes home here, and he cannot, according to my view of right and wrong, be sent back. Better by far to stop the further introduction of Indians altogether than to take what work you can and order them away. The Colony or a part of the Colony seems to want Indians but also wishes to avoid the consequences of Indian immigration."

What testimony can be more eloquent than these admissions. The bill was, as Gandhi put it, "an insult to British subjects, a disgrace to its authors and a slight upon England." However, it began to adorn the Statute Book from 1896.

Though the passing of the Disfranchisement and Immigration Bills marked the failure of Gandhi's attempts still, as Gokhale used to say, "the measure of our failures is also the measure of our success"; and the genuine awakening of the 50,000 and odd Indians, resident in Natal, was the greatest triumph of the organizing genius and the capacity for leadership of this young Kathiawari barrister. His enthusiasm was contagious; so were his iron will and lofty spirit. In the degrading atmosphere of semi-slavery which it was the lot of Indians to live in here was a man, the embodiment of noble virtues, whose very presence was an inspiration and which effectively prevented his countrymen from

lapsing into that irresponsible moral life which is the inevitable fate of those placed in such situations. It was through his efforts, that the Natal Indian Congress and the Natal Indian Educational Association were established.

And now Gandhi thought that the isolated work of Natal Indians must be backed up by strong moral support from the Motherland. As representative of the South African Indians, he returned to India (with the secondary object of bringing his family) in time probably to attend the Poona Congress (1895). He spent nearly two years in India, toured all round, interviewed most of the prominent leaders and secured their sympathies. He lectured at various places and published a pamphlet succinctly describing the grievances of British Indians in South Africa. On September 26th, 1896, he delivered at the Framji Cowasjee Institute, Bombay, a lecture which created a very good impression. In introducing Gandhi (the Hon. Mr.) Mehta paid a tribute to the "skill, pluck, ability and perseverance" with which Gandhi had taken up the cause of the Indians in Africa. He also congratulated the lecturer on his enterprising spirit in seeking for professional practice in such difficult place as the interior of Africa. Gandhi concluded his speech with the following appeal

"We are hemmed in all sides in South Africa. We are yet infants. We have a right to appeal to you for protection. We place our position before you and now the responsibility will rest to a very great extent on your shoulders. If the yoke of oppression is not removed from our necks. Being under it, we can only cry out in anguish. It is for you, our elder and freer brethren, to

remove it; and I am sure we shall not have cried in vain."

It was during this India tour, that Gandhi met for the first time his hero and political *Guru*—Gopal Krishna Gokhale. "It was really a case of love at first sight." The unbounded enthusiasm of Gokhale and his thorough study of public questions must have deeply impressed Gandhi. In Gokhale's refined and charming manner, Gandhi but saw the mirror of his own. What Gokhale lacked—sternness and personality—Gandhi does not seem to have discovered; and in the first flush of friendship and the contemplation of so much self-sacrifice and disinterested ambition, this was but natural.

Gandhi and his family left India on 28th November 1896, by the *S. S Courland*. Two days later, the *S. S. Naderi*, another steamer belonging to the Company of Dada Abdulla, left Bombay for Natal. Both the steamers reached Durban together. The simultaneous arrival of these two steamers carrying a number of Indian passengers lent colour to the rumours already afloat that Gandhi had "organized an independent immigration agency in India to land his countrymen in Natal at the rate of one to two thousand per month."

While Gandhi was enlightening the public opinion in India on the South African question, a mutilated summary of his pamphlet was cabled by Reuter to Natal "Sep. 14. A pamphlet published in India declares that the Indians in Natal are robbed and assaulted and treated like beasts and are unable to obtain redress." This cable created a sensation in Natal and the vagaries of Reuter's reporter afforded a perhaps welcome opportunity to some of the "enterprising" Colonists to try to

overawe Gandhi and party when they would land at Durban. How grossly perverted Reuter's report was, can be seen from the subsequent statement of the *Natal Mercury* which said, "Mr. Gandhi has done nothing which he is not entitled to do and we cannot honestly say that his latest pamphlet is an unfair statement of the case from his point of view. Reuter's cable is a gross exaggeration of Mr. Gandhi's statement." But the mischief was already done. Angry meetings were held all over Natal and Gandhi was accused of having "besmirched the good name of the Colony that had entertained him." 'Entertained,' forsooth! The following resolution was passed at Durban:—

"That this meeting is strongly of opinion that the time has come to prevent the landing of any more free Indians or Asiatics in the Colony and now calls upon the Government to take steps to have returned to India at the Colony's expense, the Asiatics at present on board the *Naderi* and *Cauriznd* and to prevent any other free Indians or Associates from being landed in Durban,"

At another meeting, a speaker said:—

"I had heard a naval volunteer say last night that he would give a month's pay for a shot at the ship. Is every man present, prepared to pay down a month's pay to carry out the object of the meeting? (Applause and cries of assent). Then the Government would know what they had behind them."

When the Government did find "what they had behind them," they were but too glad to help the infuriated citizens. The Hon. H. Escombe, the Attorney-

General of Natal, in pursuance of the policy of harassing and frightening the Indians that were about to land, at once quarantined the vessels. No reason was assigned. There was no disease on board. At last, the captains of the ships wrote (12th January 1897) a peremptory letter to Mr. Escombe drawing his attention to the fact that the steamers were at anchorage for 24 days at a cost of £160 per day to them and requesting him "to take steps to suppress the rioters so as to enable them to disembark the steamers," failing which, "preparations will be at once commenced to steam into the harbour relying on the protection which the Government is bound to give." This ultimatum had the desired effect and not only was permission to land duly given but the Attorney-General, who had seen that the three or four thousand demonstrators had failed, promised the captains and the passenger every protection which the laws of the land could afford. He then returned to the shore and in the name of the Queen ordered the mob to disperse. The order was obeyed; the mob began to disperse. But when after a short time, Gandhi actually landed, the forces of disorder got loose. The civilised weapons of a civilised mob—stones, fishes and rotten eggs—were hurled at Gandhi from all sides. Apparently, none of those responsible for the maintenance of law and order thought that "brickbats must be met with bullets." This was only the beginning. A voice from behind Gandhi loudly asked "Are you the man who wrote to the Press?" and before Gandhi could turn, he received a brutal kick. He held on, half unconscious, to some adjacent railings and the assailant again kicked him. There

is no knowing how the affair would have ended, had not the wife of the Superintendent of Police chivalrously run up to Gandhi and taken him to her residence. When, however, Gandhi left her place, he was again dogged by the mob. At last, he had to make his escape by disguising himself as a police constable.

We have some what dilated upon this episode, not merely to demonstrate the bitter race prejudice that Gandhi had to encounter during the whole of his South African career but also to show how he had, even at that young age—he was only 27—that coolness and readiness of mind, that brave spirit which no dangers could daunt, a self-confidence out of all proportion to his age and experience, which we have learnt to associate with his name. There was also the same sweetness and gentility, which disarmed opposition, which put to shame even his enemies and made them regret their errors and misunderstanding. Some time later, Mr. Escombe, the Attorney-General, met Gandhi and expressed his profound regret for the part he had played in mobbing Gandhi. He highly complimented Gandhi and said that had he really known him then, he would not, under any circumstances, have abetted the mob-fury at the time of his landing. Such a tribute from such a quarter is the highest triumph of suavity of nature. There are those who dazzle and overawe their opponents by the supreme brilliance of their personality. But to carry on a bitter struggle for years together, and to come out of it all without one angry word or reproachful gesture, blessing all, forgiving all, evoking similar sentiments from pledged opponents:—verily of such stuff are saints and angels made!

Knowing as we do these traits of Gandhi, we are not surprised at his offer of help to Britain at the commencement of the Anglo-Boer War. There are those who consider that this offer was actuated by the anxiety to prove British Indians' loyalty! It is only inferior minds who go about proving their virtues! Gandhi's offer of help was due solely and wholly to his innate chivalry, which disdains to strike a cowardly blow, which refuses to take advantage of the difficulties of the opponent. But the Government laughed at the idea. "You Indians know nothing of the war; you would be only a drag on the army; you would have to be taken care of, instead of being able to help us." Even ordinary servants' work in the War-Hospital was refused. "It all needs training" was the disappointing reply. It was only when the war entered a critical stage that Gandhi's offer was accepted and an Indian Ambulance Corps allowed to be formed.

Nothing shows Gandhi's capacity for leadership more than the spontaneity with which the Indian residents in Natal flocked to form the Corps. It was a humanitarian but inglorious work. Moreover, it was both taxing and dangerous. Still at the call of Gandhi, one thousand persons enlisted themselves for the purpose of saving the lives and nursing the wounds of those very men who, in times of peace, would make their lives miserable. It is comparatively easy for a leader to forget and forgive. But the rank and file are not generally disposed to do so. How often, in the history of great movements, have leaders been compelled, even against their better feelings and judgment, to yield to the passionate clamours of their followers!

The willing obedience of Natal Indians to the advice of their young leader does both him and them credit because that obedience meant forgiveness to their persecutor and the exposing of themselves, without any clear prospect of reward, to the dangers of war.

The war was over; peace was restored; and the services of Gandhi and his compatriots were rewarded with war medals.

It was now (1901) more than eight years since Gandhi first came to South Africa. It was therefore natural that he should pine for home. Moreover his health was far from satisfactory. In the rosy atmosphere of the establishment of peace and the frank exchange of mutual compliments, he imagined that the grievances which had been the lot of Indians, were a thing of the past. He therefore decided to return to India. A brilliant farewell function was organized. Gandhi accepted the address that was presented to him. He however refused to touch the munificent gift of gold plate and jewellery which the devoted Indians presented to him. The cause he had championed was sacred. He had done his duty and nothing more. He therefore requested his brethren to utilize the gift for the cause that all held dear.

A capable and conscientious lawyer, a loving friend, a scrupulously fair and chivalrous opponent, a tactful leader,—such was Gandhi as all knew him. Half concealed from his own self was an iron will, which nothing could break or bend, a power of sacrifice which delighted at every stroke of misfortune, a sweetness which suffering could tend to make only sweeter. The innate hilarity of his nature and the irrepressible

sense of humour showed with what ease he could bear the burden of leadership. The genuine kindliness of nature, of which politeness is but a wretched imitation, that sense of delicacy and modesty which is supposed to be inconsistent with an adventurous and enterprising spirit, won the hearts of all. "By two wings," says Thomas à Kempis, "is a man lifted up above earthly things—simplicity and purity;" and the elements of both these spiritual qualities Gandhi had in an abundant measure.

CHAPTER III

" THE DOG'S COLLAR "

All who consider that this is not a religious struggle, that this is not a religious cause, do not know what religion means. I believe I have acquired some knowledge of most religions and every religion teaches that if a man does anything that degrades his manhood, there is no religion in him. If religion means communicating with God, trusting in God, then I have no hesitation in saying that it is absolutely irreligious to degrade ourselves in order that we might be able to earn a few pounds or pence in the Transvaal.

M. K. Gandhi (1908)

AFTER a few months' successful practice in the law courts of Kathiawar with Rajkot as his centre, Gandhi went to Bombay with the object of making it his permanent home. In the meanwhile he attended, as a delegate, the National Congress at Calcutta (Dec. 1901). So irrepressible was his thirst for work and so genuine his modesty that this successful barrister is said to have actually enrolled himself as a volunteer and worked as Captain of the Corps. (The Hon. Sir) Dinsha Wacha who presided on the occasion, found him "very good, very active, bursting with enthusiasm." It was Gandhi's ambition to work under the leadership of

Gokhale, Mehta and Wacha; but in this he was disappointed as, ere long, he was peremptorily called to Natal to head an Indian deputation to Mr. Chamberlain. Owing to considerations of his health, which was still indifferent, Gandhi hesitated for a time; but being repeatedly summoned, he decided to go.

He led the Natal deputation to Mr. Chamberlain; but he was refused permission to head the Transvaal Indians deputation to the same authority, and it became increasingly clear that an organized attempt was about to be made to render still more unbearable the lot of the Transvaal Indians. Under these circumstances, Gandhi was not the man to hurry back to India, leaving his own countrymen in the lurch. Knowing that part of the constitutional war would have to be waged through the Law Courts, he got himself enrolled (April 1903) as a duly qualified Attorney of the Supreme Court of the Transvaal.

Before the Boer War, there was no restriction to the number of Indians immigrating into the Transvaal. Only, they were required to get themselves registered by paying down a sum of £3. But shortly after the British occupation of the territory, British Indian refugees were allowed to return only in carefully restricted numbers. In 1903, the Peace Preservation Ordinance was passed "requiring Indians to provide themselves with permits to enter and reside in the new Colony. For the first time, the document was to some extent descriptive. Complaints also began to be made that British Indians, who were not pre-war refugees, were entering the Colony." An investigation was made. The chief Secretary for Permits stated that "an illicit influx

on any but the most minute scale was an impossibility." Lord Milner accepted the correctness of the statement; but in order to conciliate popular prejudices, he suggested to the Indian leaders "the advisability of the voluntary re-registration of the entire Indian community, with full details of identification." On receiving the explicit promise of Lord Milner that "no further registration would be necessary nor a fresh permit required," Gandhi agreed to the proposal; and a full and exhaustive registration was duly and satisfactorily made.

Emboldened by the "docility" with which the British Indians, under the advice of Lord Milner, had voluntarily registered themselves, emboldened also by the approaching grant of Responsible Government and perhaps made desperate by the continuous clamours of the White community which was constantly fed up on the rumours of the Asiatic Influx, the Transvaal Government, towards the middle of 1906, decided to re-register the British Indians in a wantonly inhuman and arbitrary manner, and accordingly the Transvaal Government Gazette Extraordinary of August 22nd 1906, published the Draft Asiatic Ordinance the chief features of which were thus described by the *Star*, an anti-Asiatic newspaper:—

"From the beginning of the next year (1907) every Asiatic resident not being an indentured labourer will be compelled to take out a new certificate of registration and this process will enable the authorities to investigate each claim on its merits. Once the work of registration has been completed, no Asiatic, who cannot produce such a certificate, will obtain a trading

license or be entitled to reside within the Colony. A satisfactory feature of the draft law is the salutary penalties provided for infringements of its terms. The risk of detection will be so great and the punishment so severe that a stop will be put to the practice of personation which has grown up under the present unavoidably lax administration. Under the regulations, which the Lieut. Governor is empowered to pass, a system of identification will be introduced, which will render it impossible for one Asiatic to make fraudulent use of a permit belonging to another."

The grounds for the Indian opposition to the proposed Ordinance were thus tersely put forth by Gandhi:—

(1) So far from there being an "influx" of Asiatics in the Transvaal, their number has actually decreased. Before the Boer war, British Indians numbered 15,000 while according to the census of 1904, they number only 13,000. The British Indians would therefore challenge an "open, judicial and British inquiry into the question of the alleged 'influx' of Indians before such a drastic legislation is undertaken.

(2) To check surreptitious or fraudulent entry of Indians into the Transvaal there is in the Peace Preservation Ordinance, a clause which enables officials appointed thereunder, to inspect permits and non-production of the same, renders persons inspected, liable to be arrested and ultimately deported from the Colony. Failure to leave the Colony, carries with it a heavy penalty. Instead of employing this efficient instrument at its disposal why has Government devised this degrading legislation? An inspection of the

documents at present possessed by the British Indians would enable the authorities to remove from the Colony unauthorised residents.

(3) The Draft Ordinance take no note of the elaborate registration carried on by Captain Hamilton Fowle, a registration arranged in consultation with the Indian community which, courteously and gracefully bowing to the advice given by Lord Milner, consented to the registration although there was no legal sanction for it so far as those, who had already paid £3 to the old Government, were concerned.

(4) The effect of the Ordinance will be to impugn the validity of every permit and registration-certificate issued before. Every holder of these documents will have to appear before the registrar of Asiatics and satisfy that official that he is the lawful holder, by subjecting himself to all kinds of unnecessary and often insulting questions.

(5) At present the right of refusing or granting a permit rests with the Governor. The New Draft Law transfers this power to the new official called the Registrar which can hardly be called an improvement.

(6) The most painful and degrading part of the bill is the system of identification with ten finger prints of the holder. In no civilised country has such a system been in vogue. It is used only in respect to criminals.

(7) It is a mistake to call the new Ordinance an amending Ordinance, because its scope is entirely different from that of Law No. 3 of 1885. The latter penalizes Indian traders to the extent of one single payment of £3 whilst the former entirely restricts the immigration of British Indians and though, considering

the prejudice that exists, the Indians have no quarrel with the restriction, the manner of carrying it out is barbarous and hence objectionable. The Law of 1885 affected only traders; the new Ordinance affects all—women, children and non-traders.

On behalf of the British Indian Association (established by Gandhi in 1903) a deputation, consisting of Messrs. Gandhi, Abdul Ganie, Essop Mian, Hajee Vajir and Peter Moonlight, waited upon Mr. Duncan, the Colonial Secretary. The Deputationists got a patient hearing; only a formal reply was vouchsafed that Government would consider the suggestions. On September 4th, the Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly and with a few minor alterations, was passed (September 12th). On the 11th of September, a mass meeting of Indians was held at the Old Empire Theatre, Johannesburg. The theatre was "packed from floor to ceiling." About 3,000 people—a very large audience in the Transvaal—attended. The Chairman, Mr. Abdul Ganie, made a powerful speech. A number of resolutions was passed. Resolution IV declared:—

"In the event of the Legislative Council and the Imperial authorities rejecting the humble prayer of Indian community, this mass meeting resolves that rather than submit to the galling, tyrannous and un-British requirements, every British Indian shall submit himself to imprisonment."

In supporting this resolution Gandhi said:—

"By some critics, it might be thought that there is a defect in the chain of (our) reasoning because we ask for redress of our grievances and then immediately threaten to go to goal if our prayers are not granted. We are

not holding out a threat. It is merely a question of one ounce of practice which is worth whole tons of speeches and writings. Every adjective used (by us) is justified by the occasion and if I could find a stronger adjective I would use it. I have studied the whole of the anti-Asiatic Legislation throughout South Africa but I never came across anything like this present Ordinance. I feel we have done the right thing in taking this step. In all our action in this respect, we are full of loyalty. I know my countrymen; I know I can trust them and I know also that when occasion requires a heroic step to be taken, I know every man amongst us would take it."

The British Indians were told that the Legislature would not be "intimidated by such passive threats" and that "the passive resistance of a handful of British Indians would simply provoke a movement for their wholesale expulsion."

The last "constitutional" resort of an oppressed party is deputation to the Imperial Government; accordingly, Gandhi and Haji Vajir Ally left (3rd October 1906) for England to wait upon the Colonial Secretary and appeal to him to request His Majesty to veto against the offending measure. Gandhi, however, had not much hope of success. At a farewell meeting (30th Sept.) he said:—

"We shall of course try our best; but there is little chance of our prayer being granted. We therefore must mainly rely upon the 4th resolution (passed at the Johannesburg meeting on Sept. 11th). We shall explain our case to all our friends in England. You too will do your duty by not submitting to registration.

Money must be collected to carry on the movement and what is more important still, the Hindus and Mahomedans must be absolutely united."

Already he had planned to organize Passive Resistance Movement on a large scale. In his clear-cut language he had been issuing instructions to his countrymen on many questions. *e.g.* (1) How to oppose the law (2) Whether to defend oneself in court (3) Whether to give bail (4) Whether to pay fine imposed. These and many other points are as fresh to-day as they were in 1906 and it is remarkable to find identical answers, sometimes couched in identical phraseology. To those who asked "What if filling the goals would prove fruitless," he would invariably reply, "To be locked up in a goal is itself a sufficient reward."

The usual attempts to condemn a cause by condemning its protagonists were mad and Gandhi was represented to be keen on the Asiatic question because he had his own axe to grind! The following remarks of the Johannesburg *Star* may serve as specimen:—

"No one has ever denied to Mr. Gandhi the qualities of a persistent and convincing advocate. The desire of prosperous Asiatic traders and artisans to introduce their friends and relations to a land of promise is extremely natural and creditable to them. It is impossible also to ignore the fact that some of them have found the actual process of introduction to be a highly profitable enterprise. Mr. Gandhi, for instance, is known to have built up a considerable business as agent for dealing with the Permit Office. We do not doubt his sincerity in wishing to see a large and flourishing Indian population in the Transvaal but he has

certainly a very special personal reason for desiring the increase."

Now the *Star* ought to have known that in the statement read and submitted by Gandhi before Lord Selborne it was plainly stated that "recognizing the great popular prejudice against the unrestricted immigration of Asiatics, the British Indian community is prepared to agree to such restriction etc." As regards Gandhi's building up a considerable business as agent for dealing with the Permit Office, the truth is that in every such instance he "charged but a nominal fee." Besides, the progress of the Passive Resistance Movement ought to be a crushing reply to this charge. When the movement started Gandhi was a flourishing barrister; towards its close, he left off his practice, gave away his savings and voluntarily accepted a life of poverty and asceticism.

Gandhi reached London on October 20th and left it for South Africa on December 1st. He has a very busy time of it during this brief period of forty days. The main object of the deputation was, of course, to wait upon Lord Elgin, the Colonial Secretary. Gandhi also wanted to interview the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman and Mr. (Lord) Morley, Secretary of State for India. Then there was the fatiguing work of meeting, persuading and convincing members of the Parliament. The newspapers also had, to be roused into interest over the South African Indians' grievances. Gandhi tried to reach as many as he could; but it was hardly possible to break through the walls of aristocratic prejudices and vested interests. Though several newspapers noticed the arrival of the

deputation and passed some indifferent comments upon its mission, still, not more than half a dozen papers had the curiosity to study the case at first hand by availing themselves of the presence, in London, of the Transvaal Indian leaders. The *Tribune*, the *Morning Leader*, the *South Africa*, interviewed Gandhi. The *Times* was good enough to publish his letters; and the Editor of the *Daily News* wrote a very strong leading article in favour of Indians after Gandhi had convinced him of the righteousness of his cause. Barring these, the other papers were either indifferent or hostile. The work of interviewing members of Parliament occupied much time, and in spite of his best endeavours, Gandhi could hardly meet more than two or three members in the course of a day. These difficulties convinced Gandhi of the necessity of a permanent legation in England incessantly at work and trying to create and keep up the Britisher's interest in South African questions. Times were bad enough and worse times were expected with the grant of Responsible Government to the South African Colonies. Dadabhai Naoroji, who was then in England, threw himself into the work with an ardour peculiarly his own. The energy and enthusiasm of Sir Mancherji Bhownagree was scarcely less than that of Gandhi himself. The disinterested services of Dadabhai, Sir Mancherji and Amir Ali, enabled Gandhi to secure for his cause the co-operation of men like Sir George Birdwood, W. T. Stead, Theodore Morrison, Lord Reay and Sir Reaymond West. On November 8th, the deputation, headed by Sir Lepel Griffin and consisting, besides Gandhi and Mr. Ally, of Lord Stanley, Sir George Birdwood Mr. J. D. Rees,

Sir Henry Cotton, Mr. Harold Cox, Dadabhai Naoroji and Sir M. M. Bhownaggee, waited upon Lord Elgin-Lepel Griffin in introducing the delegates made an impassioned speech. Summarizing the provisions of the Ordinance, he said:—

"Under this Ordinance every one in the Transval is exposed to the most rigorous investigation; the impressions of his fingers are to be recorded on every pass; no one is allowed in, man, woman (this was a mistake which Gandhi immediately corrected. In the amended Act women were exempted from the odious provisions) or child, without registration of so rigorous a character that it has been unheard of in any civilised country. Every Indian in the Transvaal, even babes in arms, will be obliged to be registered under such conditions as only ordinarily apply to convicts in a civilised country; and evasions, ignorance or even forgetfulness, is punished by crushing fines, by imprisonment with hard labour, by expulsion and by ruin. Indeed, with the exception of the Russian legislation against the Jews, there is no legislation comparable to this on the continent, and in England, if we wanted a similar case, we shall have to go back to the time of the Plantagenets."

Gandhi followed him and demanded that "British Indians ought to be treated as British Subjects and ought not to be included with the general body of the Asiatics." He concluded by saying that "the least that is due to the British Indian community is to appoint a commission" which would consider the principle involved, the adequacy of the existing, and the necessity for further, legislation.

The reply of Lord Elgin was just what might be expected from one who tries to please both the contending parties. The deputation asked that "the whips which the Boers have inflicted upon us may not be changed into scorpions, wielded by the British Government." Lord Elgin, with many professions of sympathy and in spite of the bitter wails of the patient himself, persisted in imagining that the scorpions had no poison. "If one thumb impression is voluntarily given where was the objection to ten finger impressions?" The Indians felt this requirement to be as humiliating as a dog's collar. Lord Elgin on the contrary seemed to agree with the *Rand daily Mail* which thought the Indians were fighting shy of the requirements, "just as an Englishman may dislike the income-tax returns or a spinster of uncertain age shrink from a census form or a British tourist object from being prohibited from taking photographs in Japan." The truth seems to be that in spite of his "posture of impartiality" the attitude of Lord Elgin was "somewhat coloured" by the "dastardly attack of a soured and treacherous individual" who represented to Lord Elgin that the deputation was not really representative. "We are in possession of sworn declarations" says the Indian Opinion, "that this individual obtained signatures of ignorant persons to a blank piece of paper having first held himself out to be authorised to do so by the British Indian Association of the Transvaal." The trick was soon discovered and to this circumstance may be attributed the strongly sympathetic tone of Mr. Morley's reply to the deputation's appeal. Yet till the end the issue was uncertain

and till the end Gandhi was advising his compatriots to take lessons in heroism from the woman-suffragists of England. At long last, the declaration was made that "Lord Elgin is unable, without further consideration, to advise His Majesty the King that the Transvaal Asiatic Ordinance shall be brought into operation." As a consequence it was also declared that "the provisions of the Ordinance would not be proceeded with." To this extent then the mission of Gandhi and Mr. Ally was successful. It was clear that the Liberal Government did not care to soil its record by sanctioning an odious measure especially when they knew that the Transvaal Government could get the needful done after the grant (1907) of Responsible Government.

Before Gandhi left England he organized a meeting—"the first and largest of its kind"—of about hundred members of the House of Commons—where he made a "spirited speech." To the friends who had helped the deputation in England, he gave a complimentary breakfast at the Hotel Cecil and it was on this occasion that the South Africa British Indian Committee was established, with Sir Mancherji Bhownaggree as its Chairman. The delegates made a very good impression and even the London correspondent of the *Rand Daily Mail* said :—"Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Ally could not have been improved upon, as delegates. Mr. Gandhi, with his intellectual face, his low intense voice and his unusual power of concentrating his thought, carried all before him in a personal sense ; while Mr. Ally's sturdy pointed speaking has also told well.,"

Whatever the success—personal or political—of Gandhi and Mr. Ally, was short-lived. For, immediately

after the grant of Responsible Self-Government, practically the first act done by the new Transvaal Parliament was to rush the Asiatic Law Amendment Bill, both through the Legislative Assembly and thence through the Legislative Council in less than two days (March 21st and 22nd 1897). The Transvaal legislators had not even the decency to wait for three months—a statutory period required to pass between the first and the second reading of the bill. Lionel Curtis, of the Round Table fame; was the moving spirit. He declared that the matter was urgent because the Asiatics were entering the Transvaal at the rate of hundred per month. This statement was directly in contradiction to that of Mr. Chamney, the Registrar of the Asiatics who put under twenty-one, the monthly unauthorised and undetected 'influx' of Asiatics. But even assuming the figures of Mr. Curtis to be correct, where was the necessity for this inordinate haste? The truth was that the Transvaal legislators were itching to drive British Indians out of their country and as this was "not possible for them with any show of decency" to do "they wished to attain their end by making it so difficult for the Indians to remain as to render their lot unbearable in the country of their adoption." As regards the attitude of the Imperial Government, they had no care whatsoever. One worthy legislator facetiously said that the Transvaal "should cease to be British for, say, half an hour and then rejoin under its own condition." Gandhi knew that this was a challenge and he welcomed it. He also knew that it was an 'unequal' struggle between the giant and the dwarf. But he was not a man

to be cowed down. With his usual chivalry and directness he said:—

"We must congratulate the Transvaal Government for the courage of their convictions. Nothing else was expected from men who have bled for their freedom and who have braved innumerable risks. We (on our part) must meet bravery with bravery. The Government have refused to be cajoled, by friendly representations from Downing Street or by Indians' threats of passive resistance, into issuing softly-worded Regulations. If we are conscious of the mark of slavery the Act will put on us, we will meet it and refuse to submit to it. The brave rulers who knew the value of action rather than of any speech can only respond to bravery and practical action."

It has been well said that Gandhi contains within himself two personalities—Gandhi the Fighter and Gandhi the Peacemaker. It is very difficult for the leader of an army of Passive Resisters to be conciliatory and remain popular at one and the same time. If, in spite of his pacific attitude, he succeeds in retaining hold over his followers, he is unable to nerve them into action at the proper moment. He is thus exposed to a double danger; he must encourage inaction or court sullenness and resentment in the rank and file. More than once, Gandhi has had, in India, to sacrifice his influence at the altar of his Pacifism. But in the Transvaal, his experience has been somewhat different. Nearly four or five times, during the eventful months of 1907, he suggested to the Government a way out of the *impasse*. Every time however he called upon the people to act, they did, without getting frightened.

The sting of the Act (which received Royal sanction early in May 1907) lay in compulsion. Gandhi offered voluntary registration, as a compromise, similar to the one made (1903) at the instance of Lord Milner. He made this suggestion at a Johannesburg mass-meeting. But the Government was obdurate. They wanted no favour. They wanted to crush the Indian spirit. So they rejected Gandhi's offer. They not only published odious Regulations to carry out the provisions of the Asiatic Act but, to show how much weight they attached either to the sentiments or to the "threats" of British Indians, they introduced in the House a fresh legislation—the Transvaal Immigration Restriction Bill (July 1907). If the cup of Indian humiliation was not already full, now at least it was so.

What was to be done? Nothing, of course, was to be expected from Downing Street. Not only was the Royal assent given to the Act but Mr. Churchill declared, "we recognize the right of South Africa to regulate her Asiatic Immigration as she likes." He admitted that "it is quite true that before the war broke out, we were able to bring" greater "pressure to bear upon the Transvaal Government." Gandhi himself wanted the "salvation of Indians in South Africa" to be attained across the South African veldt and not by stretching hands across the seas. He knew that "there is not such thing (and rightly) as a free gift in the economy of the Commonwealth." Our salvation, therefore, must be "purchased by real sacrifice"—by "passive resistance"—which was in his opinion the incorrect term used for his "policy of communal suffering." To him personally it was not a question of

political hardships or of political self-respect. It was partly a national and partly a religious question. He wanted to see whether "a really superior civilization can ever finally succumb to a really inferior one." Besides, on the 11th of September 1906, he and hundreds of his countrymen had *religiously* vowed not to submit to the Act. "We have sworn before God not to submit to the Law. Perjury before a Court of Law can be expiated by suffering punishment that may be awarded by a judge. What expiation is possible before the Judge of judges who never errs? If we perjured ourselves before Him, we would then indeed be unfit associates for any civilized body of men and the ghettos of old will be our proper and deserved lot."

And such is the power of "Soul-force" that the Government flushed with the pride of power that they were, dared not simultaneously bring into operation, all over the Colony, the Regulations for fear, as the *Rand Daily Mail* put it, "that there might be a movement to ignore the Act upon something at the large scale hinted at by Mr. Gandhi." They wanted to carry out the registration, district by district, and imagining that Pretoria was "notoriously the weakest spot in the organisation of the Indians, they opened a Permit Office at Pretoria on July 1st and notified to the Indians to register themselves within one month. "What with house to house canvassing, public meetings and the work of self-sacrificing Indian volunteers, called by the Transvaal Press 'Pickets,' only one hundred persons out of a population of 1500 were prevailed upon to register themselves. Even the *Star* admitted that "a high degree of moral suasion" was applied and

that "pickets were noticeable in the immediate vicinity," and this was strictly in accordance with Gandhi's instruction. "Anything like compulsion is contrary to the spirit of our struggle," said he. We want to be free from the yoke of the Registration Act and do not want to exchange it for any other." There was no question of loyalty. "Loyal we are, loyal we shall remain and loyal we'll die" was the motto of the people. The whole of Pretoria was "placarded with posters bearing the following legend":—

Boycott the Permit Office

By going to gaol we do not resist but suffer for
our common good and self-respect.

Loyalty to the King demands Loyalty to the King
of Kings,

Indians Be Free.

The whole thing was an eye-opener to the Colonial Whites. Even the *Pretoria News* made the following significant admission :—

"We may say very frankly that we have upto the present disregarded the threats of the British Indian Association and have looked upon what is known as the 'gaol resolution' as not a very serious undertaking, designed to bluff the Imperial Government rather than with the idea of its being actually carried out. In view of the later developments, however, the matter assumes a more serious aspect and the Government would do well to reconsider the administration of the law and see whether a middle way cannot be found out of the difficulty."

Lest the Government would feel the humiliation of climbing down, Gandhi, at a mass meeting of British

Indians at Pretoria, reiterated, for the benefit of the Government, his offer of voluntary registration. In doing so he said :

"The cup is now full to overflowing and all Indians recognize that it is not possible to accept the Act and remain in this country. I reiterate the terms of the compromise whereby we would do everything required by the Act without any stigma attaching to our community. If we submit to the law there is no guarantee that this legislation would be final. The natural consequences of such legislation would be segregation in locations and finally expulsion from the country."

Instead of grasping the outstretched hand of friendship, General Smuts threatened to carry out in full the "provisions of the Asiatic Law Amendment Act" and declared that if "the resistance of Indians leads to (unpleasant) results, they will have only themselves and their leaders to blame." "Any Indian, who has not registered himself after the date of expiration of the registration, will be put across the border. No trade-licenses would be issued unless registration takes place, and the result would be that all Indian stores would be closed. The Government have made up their mind to make this, a white man's country and however difficult the task before us in this direction, we have put our foot down and would keep it there."

No pressure, however, overt or covert, official or non-official, could induce the Indians (and the Chinese who too joined the moment) to register themselves. The Registration Office was opened, one after another, in all Indian populated places,—Germiston, Pietersburg Krugersdrop, Volksrust, Johannesburg etc,—but the

results were quite disappointing to the Government. There was a new spirit abroad. A certain firm of Johannesburg wholesale provision merchants having large Chinese *Clientele*, informed them that unless they registered themselves, all further credits would be stopped. The clients replied by asking the total amount of the debit entries against their names, promised immediate payment and threatened future complete boycott and thus brought the firm round and extorted profuse apologies. An Indian firm of Pietersburg, when pressed by a European wholesale House in Durban, to comply with the provisions of the Act, indignantly cancelled their order. The Government extended the last limit by one month; that too was further extended by another month and yet on the last date fixed for the purpose (30th Nov.) only 511 persons, out of a population of over 13,000, had submitted to registration. The Government was crest fallen. The South African Indians were jubilant. Downing Street was sullen and watchful and all India sympathetic and expectant. Well might Gokhale cable "Anxious interest. Deepest sympathy. Admiration. Trust securely Divine Will." "Mr. Advocate Gandhi, scholar and philosopher," had indeed shown of what stuff he and his compatriots were made.

In the meanwhile the Immigration Bill had been duly passed and submitted to Lord Elgin for Royal sanction. No sooner was the Royal assent given to the Act, than General Smuts hastened to give a piece of his mind to the British Indians. Still he wanted to move very cautiously; and believing that most of the opposition to registration was "engineered" by Gandhi and his henchmen, he decided to prosecute

the leaders and see what effect their conviction had upon the Indians at large.

Accordingly in Christmas week Gandhi and twenty-four other Indians were arrested and tried (23th Dec. 1907) by Mr. Jordan, an assistant Resident Magistrate, at the B Criminal Court, Johannesburg. The trial commenced at 10 A. M. sharp. Gandhi was the first accused to be dealt with. After formal evidence was taken, Gandhi asked the indulgence of the Court to make a short statement. But the Magistrate refused to grant permission, saying that he did not want any political speech. In giving his decision Mr. Jordan hoped that "a little common-sense would be shown in these matters." "that the Asiatic population would realize that they could not trifle and play with Government and that when an Individual set himself against the will of the State, the State was stronger than the Individual and the Individual suffered and not the State." Mr. Schuurman who appeared for the Crown, applied for an order for the accused to leave the country within forty-eight hours. The Magistrate said that he had no wish to be harsh in the matter; but when Gandhi, interrupting, asked him to make the order for forty-eight hours or for even a shorter period, the Magistrate angrily said, "If that is the case, I would be the last person to disappoint you. Leave the Colony within forty-eight hours, is my order."

One by one, the other accused were tried. Gandhi "had deliberately advised all his clients to plead not guilty, so that the Court could hear from their lips what they had to say." When C. M. Pillay, one of the accused, in giving his reasons for not registering, added

"in my humble opinion, the Registrar of Asiatics is not a fit and proper person to hold the post," the Magistrate got angry and said he would not listen to nonsense of that kind; Gandhi, scrupulously fair even in the thick of fight, at once agreed with the Magistrate as to the "impropriety of the accused's remarks." When Gandhi, on behalf of Thambi Naidoo, said that forty-eight hours' notice only should be given, the Magistrate sharply said that it was not what the accused wanted but what he, the Magistrate, wanted, that mattered. The accused was a man of business and the period would be fixed at fourteen days.

At the conclusion of the court proceedings, on the open space of Government Square, Gandhi addressed a large crowd consisting of Indians, Chinese and Europeans. Addressing himself specially to the European lookers-on he said:—

"We are going on with the struggle, no matter what happens to me or to any one else. If God's message came to me that I had erred, I would be the first to acknowledge my fault and beg your forgiveness. But I do not think that I would ever receive that message. It is better to leave the Colony than lose our self-respect and honour. This is a religious struggle (and we shall) fight to the bitter end."

At Vrededorp, before a very large audience, Gandhi made an impassioned speech:—

"The first thing that voluntarily comes to my lips this morning is that Lord Elgin has put an undue strain on Indian loyalty. This is a legislation which no self-respecting nation and no self-respecting man could accept not because of its regulations, but because it is class-

legislation of the worst type, based on entire distrust and on charges flung against us without any proof. We had asked Lord Selborne and General Smuts that these charges should be proved before an impartial tribunal. They were brought by a man steeped in prejudice and incapable of judging us. I do not dwell on the fact that Indians had no representation but I do dwell on the fact that the Government should be so callous in reference to the feelings of the people who had no representative...If Jesus Christ came to Johannesburg and Pretoria and examined the hearts of General Botha, General Smuts and others, he would notice something quite strange to the Christian spirit...Why has Government not the honesty to tell the Indians that they are not wanted in the country? It seems to me that we have come to the parting of the ways.....England might have to choose between India and the Colonies.....God is with us and so long as our cause is good, I do not mind a bit what powers the Government is given or how savagely those powers are used."

Similar meetings were held at Germiston, Pretoria, Pietersburg and several other places and congratulations were offered to the Transvaal Government for making arrests. The bravery of Indians made several Colonists "confess to all uncomfortable feeling that we in the Transvaal are not playing the game, and that when our avowed object is to restrict Indian immigration the effect of our legislation is something quite different—wholesale expulsion."

In a vigorous letter to the Johannesburg Press Gandhi said:—

"The Government have now three strings to the bow

—imprisonment, the stopping of trade-licenses and deportation. All these powers are taken or given, in order to enable the Government not to stop the influx of Asiatics, because no one wants it and the Registration Act cannot stop it, not to avoid trade competition, because every Indian submitting to the Act can have as many licenses as and where he wants, but to enable them to bend Indians to their will, to do violence to their conscience, in short to unman them so that they may become as wax in their hands.

“Do the Colonists know that the deportation under the Immigration Act is worse than ordinary deportation? If I committed murder and were sentenced to transportation for life, I should be sent to a place where I should be housed and fed. But if I do not submit to this Act, I am put across the border or sent to India without a penny on me. And if I have a family in the Transvaal, they will be allowed to die of starvation. And this, mind, is to happen to men to whom the Transvaal is their adopted home and India a foreign country for purposes of earning a livelihood.

“It has been said that those who do not like the law may leave the country. That is very well spoken from a cushioned chair. The Uitlanders of the Boer Regime complained of harsh laws; they too were told (similarly) but they thought better and did not go. Are Indians to slink away from the country for fear of suffering imprisonment or worse?

“No, Sir, if I could help if, nothing would remove Indians from the country except brute force. It is no part of a citizen's duty to pay blind obedience to the laws imposed on him. And if my countrymen believe

in God and the existence of the soul, then, while they may admit that their bodies belong to the State, to be imprisoned and deported, their minds, their wills and their souls must ever remain free like the birds of the air and are beyond the reach of the swiftest arrow... If, when the leaders are withdrawn, my countrymen succumb, we shall have deserved the law. Then too, the cleanliness of passive resistance, that is Jesus' teaching—"resist not evil"—will have been justified."

General Smuts recognized that the situation was critical. "To seize about 9,500 persons and fling them into a prison would be a terrible step to take; to put them all over the border was an equally terrible step." What then was to be done? The valient General wanted the British Indians to sacrifice their leaders. "So far as the leaders are concerned," said he. "I have no mercy for them. But for those people who were placed in their present position through ignorance, I think a chance should be given."

But the attempt to separate the leaders from the followers signally failed and when on 14th January 1908 Gandhi was sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment, the Indian community vowed once more never to yield either to the blandishments or to the threats of General Smuts.

CHAPTER IV

AN OATH AGAINST AN OATH

The struggle is for a sacred principle. And for it, in spite of all difficulties, we must be prepared to die, if need be. We have chosen our remedy. It is that of fighting evil by opposing to it good * * * Such suffering is a process of purification. It involves a continual rejection of the grosser elements and a cultivation of finer in us. Thus viewed, the prolongation of the struggle need not dismay us, we may even welcome it. Victory consists not in obtaining what we want but in having suffered for the attainment of our object. The fulfilment will not be victory ; it will merely be an indication (thereof). For those who recognize this simple truth, there is so such thing as defeat. Every man has in him power to suffer to the uttermost. And this is the meaning of passive resistance.

M. K. Gandhi (Dec 1908)

FROM the incidents detailed in the foregoing chapter it will be clear that General Smuts, the Colonial Secretary, was a cool, calculating and wary diplomat. He was accustomed to feel every inch of the ground before taking the least important step. Even he, however, could not rise above his surroundings ; even he considered it his duty to be guided by race-arrogance and race-prejudice. Even he could not find it in himself to appreciate the moral sublimity of the struggle.

It is strange that his soldierly personality should have been steeped in bureaucratic ideas of prestige. Like Lord Reading in 1921, he wanted to come to terms, but instead of pursuing the straight and warrior-like path of candour, he sought to accomplish his object by a resort to diplomacy. Did he also want to take advantage of the simplicity of his illustrious opponent?

Gandhi and his two hundred followers were locked up in goal; and yet the spirit of the "coolies" was as unbending as before. It was no good either to cajole Indians or to threaten them. Blandishments were unavailing. Intimidation only roused their spirit. What was to be done?

Seeing that discretion was the better part of valour, the Government wanted to negotiate with the leaders. But how? They, of course, could not be supposed to move in the matter. So a letter was placed before Gandhi in prison for signature. Gandhi was to send the letter to the Colonial Secretary; and then the dignitary was to favourably consider that letter and release Gandhi and his compatriots.

In the letter Gandhi's offer of voluntary registration was reiterated. It was stated that the opposition was not directed so much against the finger-print requirements as against the element of compulsion. The leaders (Gandhi and others) recognized that it was impossible during the recess to repeal the Act. They, however, pointed out that the registration periods under the Act had expired; therefore registration must necessarily be voluntary. They, therefore, suggested that all Asiatics over sixteen be allowed three months within which to register themselves, the Government meanwhile

taking whatever steps necessary to legalize such registration, this also applying to Asiatics, outside the Colony, legally entitled to return. In conclusion, the leaders undertook to use their influence with their followers in making the registration a complete success.

Gandhi readily agreed with the proposal as the letter, in truth, merely repeated his own arguments in official language; where he disagreed or wanted to make his meaning clear, he made several changes in the letter, signed it himself, got it signed by two of his compatriots and sent it to General Smuts as required. The alterations made by him clearly go to prove that the repeal of the Asiatic Act was demanded by him.

The letter was signed and sent on January 29th. On the following day, Gandhi was taken to Pretoria, under escort, to call on the Colonial Secretary. "At the interview I had" says Gandhi, "with the Colonial Secretary, the repeal of the Asiatic Law Amendment Act was discussed and the promise given definitely there and then that, if the Asiatics applied for voluntary registration, the Act would be repealed." Almost immediately after, Gandhi and his followers were released.

But when the voluntary registration was nearly over and Gandhi had fulfilled his part of the contract, General Smuts recanted. He declared, "I made no promise to Mr. Gandhi either on the 30th January or on the 3rd February 1901, that Act No. 2 of 1907 would be repealed." It was thus a case of one oath versus another.

Unfortunately the promise was verbally made in the presence of one witness, the Registrar of the Asiatics, a Government servant.

Gandhi's contention is borne out by the following facts:—

(I) In his letter of 29th January 1908, he had clearly indicated that what was wanted by him was the repeal of the Asiatic Act. The General answers by pointing out that in his written reply to this letter he had merely said that he would "lay the matter before Parliament at its next session." There was no mention of a *promise for repeal*. This promise, Gandhi contends, was made verbally.

(II) Gandhi's position is unassailable when he states that the letters sent by him to General Smuts "contain proof positive of my contention that you promised to repeal the Act"; the General clearly evaded the issue when subsequently he argued that the said letters being "confidential and personal, he did not reply at any length to the different statements contained in the letters or controvert those statements with which he was not in agreement." Is not a personal and confidential letter the *most proper* place for correcting misapprehensions, if any? Here, evidently, the General's position is weakest.

(III) Gandhi says, "immediately after the assault committed on me, Mr. Chamney saw me, and he and I drew up a notice for publication, stating that on the Asiatics complying with the compromise, the Act would be repealed. This notice, Mr. Chamney said would be taken to General Smuts and then published. The next day he inquired whether, (now that) the Asiatics were registering, it is necessary to publish the notice. I never dreamed of recantation on General Smut's part and said it need not be published. I challenge

him to produce the original note." The challenge was never accepted.

Had general Smuts loyally abided by the terms of the pact, all future trouble might have been avoided. But he did not. Was this merely due to that false pride which every official feels when compelled to climb down? Or did he seek, to take advantage of the split that had occurred in the Indian camp as a result of the compromise and follow it up by eternally discrediting Gandhi's capacity for leadership? He knew that Gandhi as the head of the Indians was invincible; but Gandhi without the Indians and the Indians without Gandhi could easily be crushed. Let us, however, hark back.

It was clear that the compromise, while it pleased the majority of the Asiatics, failed to impress a small and extreme section of Gandhi's followers. Most of them were Mahomedans, whose rough and ready logic refused to accept "subtle" distinctions between compulsory registration and voluntary registration. They suspected that Gandhi had "sold" himself and his followers. Some of them resolved to give him a piece of their mind.

Like Hannibal, Gandhi never ordered his soldiers to do what he himself could not and would not do. He declared that he himself would lead the registration. Along with many others, he too had the option of giving two thumb-impressions only. But he was resolved not to avail himself of this concession. He would give ten digit impressions. He was warned that his life was in danger. But nothing would deter him. "So much the better," he said, "if my countrymen kill me." He

started to the Registration Office. His would-be murderers were shadowing him. He knew of their project; but heedless and cheerful, he moved on, accompanied by Mr. Essop Mia, Chairman of the British Indian Association and Mr. Thambi Naidoo. Within a distance of three minutes' walk to the Registration Office he was accosted by the Pathans eight in number. "Where are you all bound?" asked they with mock ignorance. "To the Registration Office, of course" replied Essop Mia. "And pray, how do you want to register?" "With ten digits" readily replied Gandhi, "though you have the option of giving thumb-impression only." Instantly a heavy stick was raised. A terrific blow was delivered. With a "Oh, Rama", Gandhi fell senseless on the spot. Still the Pathans mercilessly continued beating him, one of them, cruelly enough with an iron rod. Gandhi's friends too shared the Pathan fury. The Pathans left, thinking Gandhi to be no more. Two of them were arrested and subsequently sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. Gandhi was carried to the Rev. Doke's house. The first thing that he did on recovering consciousness was to assure his friends, that there was no serious danger, second, to issue instructions declaring that he had no intention of taking any legal action against his assailants, third, to appeal to his compatriots of the Hindu community not to be incensed against the Mahomedans and fourth, to get himself duly registered. Then and then alone did he hold himself free to be nursed and treated.

One of Gandhi's greatest quality is that he never seeks to avoid issues, he never shrinks from uncongenial facts. The "settlement" gave deep dissatisfaction

to a section of his followers and he was not slow to find that it was not Hindus but many Mahomedans—excepting of course the leaders and several others—who suspected him of treachery. With extreme delicacy but utter frankness, Gandhi tackled the problem. Some of his opponents thought he had gone too far and that he wanted to ruin them by his appeals to fill gaols. Others were convinced that he had sold them to the Government, was a coward and hence afraid of gaol. All these foolish fancies pained him. "My one duty in South Africa" said he, "is to weld the Hindus and Muslims. United we stand and divided we fall. Let us not perpetually distrust each other. Let us not be rash. Let us think before we put even one step further. Let us love and serve one another. If we fail, the storm, that rages round us, will first scatter our forces and then destroy. And then not three or thirty, but even three hundred years will not be sufficient for our regeneration."

In this atmosphere of distraction and distrust and divided counsels, the "recantations" of General Smuts, after the registration had well-nigh been completed, made confusion worse confounded. We do not know whether General Smuts did really "recant" or whether there was an honest misunderstanding between him and Gandhi. But the atmosphere we have pictured above was precisely the atmosphere which a wily diplomat would seek to exploit by 'recanting.' That the conduct of General Smuts intensified the awkwardness of Gandhi's position is clear from the bitter speech which Gandhi, for once, made (June 1908):—

"Some of my countrymen tell me and perhaps with

some justification that I did not take them into confidence when I approached General Smuts, on the strength of the letter that was placed before me in the gaol-yard. * * * I am responsible, responsible because I had too great faith in the statesmanship of General Smuts, in his honesty and in his integrity. * * * Have the people not every reason to believe that Gandhi has misled them? Have they not every reason to believe that they have no longer any business to suffer because Gandhi advises them to suffer? A fellow Pathan has assaulted me. He deserves every thanks for having assaulted me because he believed I was selling the community. * * * The Passive resistance movement has been undertaken only to gain rights for the whole of the Asiatics and not for a chosen few and if there is one man (whom I can recall)—who cannot enter this country—I, for one, do not wish to remain in this country, if my countrymen before that time do not remove this head which seems to have done grievous wrong to them."

The last sentence in the above speech referred to cases of persons domiciled in the Transvaal but who at the time of the voluntary registration were outside the country and hence could not register within the agreed limit of three months. In spite of the express understanding in the matter, General Smuts insisted that they must be registered under the Act. This went against the spirit of the compromise. Then there was the question of the repeal of the Asiatic Act. General Smuts denied having promised repeal but said that if the Asiatics agreed to certain (humiliating) conditions, he would meet their wishes. General Smuts

wanted "all Asiatics, although they might prove their pre-war domicile in the Transvaal by reason of having paid £5 to the Dutch Government or otherwise, should be treated as 'prohibited immigrants' unless they held permits granted under the Peace Preservation Ordinance or voluntary registration certificates or registration certificates under the Asiatic Act and that the test of education should not be accepted in the case of new Asiatic immigrants." This was monstrous. This denial of the domiciliary rights of pre-war Asiatic residents militated against all declarations of responsible officials; and to say that fresh British Indians, who could pass the severe tests under the Immigration Restriction Act, should be prohibited from entering the country was a novel principle altogether. Mr. Sorabji Shapurji, a wealthy resident of Charlestown (Natal) determined to test the legality of this point. He entered the border, was allowed to live in the Transvaal for ten days but was then charged and convicted under the Registration Act for having failed to register. Gandhi contended that the Asiatic Act applied only to those who were in the Colony and who resided in the Colony before the Act was passed. Mr. Sorabji could not come under it; and Mr. Sorabji was not a prohibited immigrant under the Immigrants' Restriction Act in as much as he had shown that he had sufficient means and educational attainments. The Magistrate admitted Gandhi's "argument as very subtle and very able" but refused to give Mr. Sorabji the benefit of what was clearly a loop hole left in the Act.

Meanwhile Gandhi and other leaders had written to the Registrar of Asiatics that their applications for

voluntary registration should be returned as, owing to the breach of compromise, they wanted, to withdraw them. The documents were not returned. Suits were filed in the Supreme Court for the purpose. But the Court decided that "the Asiatics have no right to recall voluntary registration applications." But this did not "thwart the purpose of the Asiatics to become dis-registered." Gandhi advised his countrymen to publicly burn the registration certificates. A preliminary meeting was held on July 5th and in view of the talk of compromise that was again in the air, it was decided to convene a mass meeting later to consider the situation and deliberate on the desirability of burning the certificates! It was unofficially communicated that General Smuts had agreed to waive all his conditions, in regard to the Asiatics whom he desired to make statutory prohibited immigrants, *except one condition* and that one was with reference to Asiatics of means and education. General Smuts was against their being allowed to immigrate,—perhaps because he knew what world of trouble *one* such Asiatic of education had been making for him. The point was carefully considered at a meeting of the British Indian Association. In order that his compatriots might arrive at a decision, uninfluenced by his personality and arguments, Gandhi deliberately remained absent. But the Committee unanimously agreed that to yield on this "crucial point, was tantamount to accepting a racial insult and that the community, without educational leaders, would be at the mercy of the Government any time that it thought fit to adopt reactionary repressive measures."

It was clear that the struggle would have to be

revived; but before the certificates were publicly burnt, it was decided still to keep the door open for compromise and at the same time to communicate to the Government the intensity of Indian opinion; and with this object in view it was decided by Hindu and Muslim leaders to trade as hawkers without licenses and thus challenge arrests. About one hundred Indians, including Harilal Gandhi, Imam Abdul Kadir, Thambi Naidoo, were arrested, tried, fined, and on their refusal to pay fine, imprisoned. When, in view of the limited gaol-accommodation, the Transvaal Government found it inconvenient to send to prisons batches after batches of Indian passive resisters, they gave no option of imprisonment to the Indians whose goods were sold under their very noses and their fines recovered.

As a mark of respect towards the gentlemen-hawkers rotting in gaol, all Indian business throughout the Transvaal was suspended on July 23rd. This was probably the first *Hartal* organized by the Gandhi. It created a tremendous impression and heartened the people for the grim struggle looming before them. To the Government it administered a solemn warning.

The *Hartal* organised on July 23rd as a mark of respect towards leading Indian prisoners in the Transvaal could as well have served as a mark of respect for Lokamanya Tilak who was convicted on the preceding night. Gandhi, who himself was in the throes of suffering, highly applauded the heroism and sacrifices of Tilak.

August 16th (1908) "witnessed such a scene" as had never been enacted in the Transvaal. Some three

thousand British Indians gathered together to "con-sign to the flames the outward sign and manifestation of the baseness and treachery whereby they had been duped into accomplishing the voluntary registration." 'The air vibrated with expectancy and a tense feeling seemed to hold every one in check—until the supreme moment came. The voluntary (registration) certificates were thrown into a large caldron, saturated with paraffin and set ablaze by Mr. Essop Mia in the name of the community.' Before the certificates were burnt, Gandhi made a long and impassioned speech :—

"I know full well that it is open to the Government to give a repeal of this legislation to-day, throw dust into our eyes and then embark upon other legislation, far harsher, far more humiliating ; but the lesson I wanted to learn myself, the lesson I would have my countrymen to learn from this struggle is this : that unenfranchised though we are, unrepresented though we are, in the Transvaal, it is open to us to clothe ourselves with an undying franchise and this consists in recognizing our humanity, in recognizing that we are part and parcel of the great universal whole, that there is the Maker of us all ruling over the destinies of mankind and that our trust should be in Him rather than in earthly kings and if my countrymen recognize that position, I say that no matter what legislation is passed over our heads, if that legislation is in conflict with our ideas of right and wrong, if it is in conflict with our conscience, if it is in conflict with our religion, then we say, we shall not submit to it."

The whole speech, from start to finish, is a powerful

indictment of the Government, and an impassioned appeal to the British Indians. It is a speech worthy of a Bright or a Gladstone.

The intensity of the Indian feeling opened the eyes of General Smuts; Gandhi and other leaders of the community were hurriedly called (18th Aug.) to confer with the Government. The discussion that ensued was eminently creditable to both the sides: many of Gandhi's objections to the Validations Bill were noted; suitable alterations were duly made and at the end of the Conference, Gandhi was asked to put down on paper, on behalf of British Indians, their further demands, so that things may be decided once for all. Accordingly Gandhi sent (20th Aug.) a private letter to General Smuts, setting forth his demands. Two of them—the repeal of the Asiatic Act and the insistence of the education test for immigration—have been already noted. The remaining referred merely to several technicalities. They involved no fresh principle. But the General chose to be angry. In moving the second reading of the Validation Bill, General Smuts incensed the Assembly by referring to the above letter of Gandhi as an ultimatum. He used a private letter to further his unstatesmanlike ends, misrepresented it by declaring it as an ultimatum and thus unnecessarily prejudiced the House against Gandhi, at a time when things were promising to settle down. General Smuts apparently thought that in view of the vast improvements made—improvements generally recognized by Gandhi and his compatriots—in the Validation Bill, the British Indians would give up their insistence on the repeal of the Asiatic Act, as, after the passing of the Validation

Bill, that Act was virtually superfluous and bound to be a dead letter. His bureaucratic mind preferred to keep a law even as a dead letter rather than feel the mortification of getting it formally repealed. He believed that when the Indians had got the essence of their demand, they would cease to fight merely for a principle. As for the education test for immigrating Indians, that was a hardship which the illiterate hawker would be scarcely supposed to vicariously suffer for. So thought General Smuts, little knowing the deep distrust his vacillating policy had created and the profound influence of the 'idealistic Gandhi' over his followers.

Probably irritated by the attitude of the Indian leaders, the Government, in spite of the plain admission of the Attorney-General that it was optional for returning Indians to avail themselves of the provisions either of the old or of the new Act, in spite of their own continued declarations that it was compulsory for returning Indians to apply for registration under the new Act, trod delicate ground and arrested and imprisoned fifty-four returning Indians under the discarded Act. But the decision of the lower courts was duly set aside by the Supreme Court, much to the discomfiture of the Transvaal Government.

Unfortunately for General Smuts, the education section of the Act called forth the spirit of Natal Indians. Scores of well educated and wealthy Natal Indians—some of them belonging formerly to the Transvaal—suspended their flourishing business, deliberately crossed the border, were arrested, imprisoned and deported. Even pro-Government papers began to grumble in the following strain: "The outstanding matters in

dispute are of so trivial a nature that it is difficult to understand any one with a pretence to statesmanship permitting them to prevent an amicable settlement. General Smuts has gained so little in reputation and had so little profit out of his encounters with the Asiatics that we should have thought he would have been only too glad to purchase peace even at the cost of another small concession, which is all the Asiatics are asking."

But that was not to be. General Smuts was on the war-path; and Gandhi was arrested (7th October 1908) and sentenced (16th October) to pay a fine of £25 or to go to gaol with hard labour for two months. Gandhi of course preferred going to goal, feeling himself to be "the happiest man in the Transvaal,

The struggle continued with unabated vigour. Arrests, imprisonments, deportations, became the order of the day. The imprisonment, release, re-arrest (15th Jan.) and re-imprisonment (25th February 1909) of Gandhi did not check the onward tide of heroism. To suffer imprisonment for a few days, week or months, is comparatively easy. But to suffer business which years of patient industry has built up and on the existence and upkeep of which is dependent the material welfare—present and future—of our nearest and dearest, to suffer such lucrative business ruined merely for the sake of a deeply cherished sentiment is ten times heroic! And this feat, many flourishing Indian merchants accomplished. Mr. A. M. Cachalia, Chairman of the British Indian Association, in calling upon his creditors to take charge of his assets, said:—

"In order further to circumvent us and seeing that

gaols have ceased to have any terror for us, rules have been framed under the Criminal Procedure Code, laying down the mode of selling the goods of those who may be fined by magistrates without the alternative of imprisonment. This move is clearly aimed at Indian merchants. They have in order to free themselves for the struggle, largely contracted their business but not given up entirely. Now they have to face voluntary poverty, enforced poverty or disgrace. They have no desire to enrich, what is to them, an unjust Government at the expence of their creditors or themselves. They have no desire to face disgrace. They must therefore, for the present, cease to be merchants and return the goods they have to their creditors, if any, or otherwise close down their stores. The saying that under an unjust Government, only those who contenance and participate in their injustice can enrich themselves or retain their riches, is about to be realised in the present case."

Who can fail to be moved by the beautiful pathos of these sentiments of a leading representative of a class of men supposed to be hard-headed? But the creditors failed to appreciate this lofty spirit and from purely political considerations made him practically insolvent. Mr. Cachalia however faced insolvency rather than face deprivation of self-respect. He paid 20s. in the £ to his creditors and thus voluntarily impoverished himself.

Gandhi was released on May 24th and the question of future policy, which had been insistent for some time past, became doubly so, in view of the prospective

Union of the South African Colonies. Important as were the immediate issues, the wide question of a proper solution of the Asiatic problem in the Union of South Africa was more important [still; and Gandhi's thoughts now began to be occupied with the desirability of sending a deputation to England. The time was most propitious. General Botha, General Smuts and several other South Africa statesmen were timed to be in London towards the middle of July 1909 and Gandhi hoped that in the detached atmosphere of London at least, they would view the Imperial question from an Imperial rather than a parochial standpoint." The only difficulty—if a difficulty it be called—in the way, was the rigidity of the ideal of a *Satyagrahi*. A *Satyagrahi*, as Gandhi truly expressed, "depends upon suffering for relief and not upon the appeal of any deputation." But there were other considerations. Were all the ten thousand and odd British Indians, true *Satyagrahis*? Was each and every one of them prepared for endless suffering? If that were so, said Gandhi, a deputation was unnecessary. But considering that "there are many Indians who have been too weak to face the suffering" of a passive resister, Gandhi, after some hesitation, decided on the course. A deputation consisting of himself and Hajee Habib sailed to England (21st June 1909) Mr. H. S. L. Polak and some others were deputed to India to awaken public opinion. In the meanwhile the dogs of repression were as active as ever.

Gandhi's arrival (10th July) in England was preceded by the murder of Sir Curzon Wilee by Madanlal Dhingra. But even had he started work under more favourable

auspices, the chances of success were very meagre. It any deputation deserved sympathetic hearing it was this: The demands were extremely moderate. They were supported by the enlightened opinion of broad-minded statesmen of the type of Lord Ampthill on the one hand and by the magnificent sufferings of hundreds of passive resisters on the other. But they failed to make any impression on the British "democracy." Writing of his experiences in England, Gandhi says;—

"The more I see of them, the more am I tired of dealing on persons considered to be great. It is all a thankless and a fruitless task. Everyon seems to be rapt in his own thoughts. Those in power have scarcely any sense of Justice for its own sake, They care morfor maintaining and magnifying their position. Had it been a question of justice, pure and simple, it would have been decided long ago. To drudge in this way, to waste one whole precious day in trying to see at most one or two persons, to spend money on all this—goes against the grain of a *Satyagrahi*. Far better to go to gaol and suffer. If our demand is granted, it would be more on account of the hardships endured by those who have gone to gaol than as a result of the labours of the deputation; and if we fail, the reason would clearly be that we have not suffered enough."

No prophet was required to foretell that the Deputation would fail. The Union Bill was duly passed in the Imperial Parliament. The modifications desired by Gandhi were not inserted. Replying to a question put by Lord Ampthill in the House of Lords, the Earl of Crewe, on behalf of the Government, said (Nov. 17th)—

"The spokesmen for the Indians have put their case

with skill and fairness. The Transvaal ministers are willing to meet the majority of difficulties. There remains however the theoretical grievance that the Transvaal was shutting out the Asiatic. The Indians are prepared to agree to a purely theoretical equality with Europeans, but the Transvaal ministers object to making this concession, on the ground that it was merely a device for bringing more Asiatics into the Colony and would lead to a continual pressure for practical equality. The Imperial Government would like all British subjects to have access to the whole of the King's dominions; but such an ideal could only be attained at a distant date. We cannot thwart the policy of self-governing Colonies. I hope the Union Parliament would take a broad view of the matters."

So the colour bar in the Draft Act of Union was to be permanent; the existing legislation concerning the movements of Indians within the Union was to be maintained unaltered "until such time as the Union Parliament may choose to interfere and modify it either for the better (which was, of course, impossible) or for the worse."

Gandhi left (Nov. 13th) England with a sad heart but with the grim determination of fighting till the bitter end, the battle of passive resistance. Already, under the covenant, since September 1906, over 2500 Indians had suffered imprisonment mostly with hard labour. Many homes were broken up, many families had been ruined in the struggle. Fathers and sons sometimes had gone to gaol simultaneously, leaving ailing mothers and weeping wives to maintain themselves by hawking fruits and vegetables. Merchants who had never

undergone physical exertion and had been brought up in the lap of luxury, had been breaking stone or doing scavengers' work in the Transvaal gaol," wretchedly fed and scantily dressed in chill winter. To this desolate home of himself and his compatriots, Gandhi returned after an absence of nearly six months. It was in the midst of this gloom, bitterness, distractions, disappointment and desolation, that the *Hind swaraj* was written (November 1909) and published.

Nothing however would arrest his spiritual growth. While on his way to England (June-end 1909) he wrote :

"Truth to tell, I rather prefer gaol-life than my first class cabin in this steamer. Here we are more attended to than babies. We are spoiled with eating. The innumerable servants leave us no room for physical exertion. I am almost tired of perpetually washing my hands and keeping them clean. They were far better in the Pretoria gaol. Oh, for the mental peace I had in gaol ! Alas ! I cannot pray here with the same depth, earnestness and devotion. This is the literal truth. Where there is pomp, where there is glitter where there is ease and pleasure,—there you cannot remain an humble and faithful servant of God."

CHAPTER V

"AN ARMY OF PEACE"

आपदस्सन्तु न शश्वद्यासु संकीर्यते हरिः ।

महाभारत

The grandest aid to the development of strong, pure, beautiful character is the endurance of suffering. Self-restraint, unselfishness, patience, gentleness,—these are the flowers which spring beneath the feet of those, who accept, but refuse to impose suffering, and the grim prisons of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Heidelberg and Volkrust are like the four gate-ways to this garden of God.

M. K. Gandhi

THE imprisonment of over 3,000 Indians, the deportation of more than two hundred passive resisters and the infliction of untold sufferings upon hundreds of families sent a wave of anger all over India. Mr. Polak, who was specially deputed to organize the public feeling in the mother-country, did his work splendidly and thousands of Rupees were collected for the relief of Indians, rendered destitute in the struggle. Mr. Ratan Tata donated, seventy-five thousand rupees—a very large sum in those days—and even the Ruling Princes of India began to show signs of interest in the movement. Gokhale was not slow to strike while the iron was hot

and in a powerful speech, moved (25th February 1910) a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council demanding that the recruitment of Indentured Labour in British India for the Colony of Natal be forthwith prohibited. The Government had to accept the resolution; strong representations were made to Downing Street. Meanwhile Lord Amphill and the South African Committee were not idle and as a result of it all, the Imperial Government sent (Oct. 1910) a despatch to the Union Government, recommending the repeal of Act 2 of 1907, "the removal of the racial bar and the substitution for the latter of the Indian suggestion of non-racial legislation, modified by the administrative differentiation effectively limiting future Indian immigration to a minimum number annually of highly-educated men." "To this despatch was appended the condition that nothing that was done to settle the Transvaal controversy at the expense of the Indians residing in the Coast Provinces would be satisfactory to the Imperial Government." Thus after allowing the infliction of untold hardships, the Imperial Government accepted those very points which, thirteen months before, Gandhi had pressed upon their attention.

Thus pressed, the Union Government had no option but to obey. They themselves were anxious to placate the British Indians at least till the Coronation Festival (June 1911) of H. M. George V was over; for they had an experience of how, at the time of the visit to South Africa of the Duke of Connaught, the Natal Indian Congress had communicated to His Royal Highness, its "deep sense of mortification that in view of our unhappy past, the sad present and the gathering clouds for

the future of our life in this part of the Empire, we are unable in our hearts and minds to rejoice with those that rejoice" but have to "weep with those that weep." Had the Colonial legislators really meant well by the British Indians, they could, at once, have called Gandhi and other leaders of the community and in consultation with them drafted a Bill to settle once for all the vexed question. They did nothing of the kind. In their own superior wisdom they drafted a Bill and published it (25th Feb. 1911) in the Union of South Africa Government Gazette Extraordinary.

Criticizing the Gazetted Bill, Gandhi wrote : —

"The Bill is evidently designed to satisfy passive resisters and over a year's experience after his famous dispatch to Lord Crewe, declining to recognize legal equality between Europeans and Indians in South Africa, has evidently taught General Smuts that he cannot safely violate the traditions of the British Empire. But the wording of the Bill does not carry out the design of its authors. It is highly satisfactory that Act 2 of 1907 is to be repealed. The exclusion of Asiatics is to be brought about not by naming and specifically prohibiting the entry of such people but by subjecting them to a rigorous Education test. In almost all other respects the measure is highly unsatisfactory. It takes away without the slightest reason, the rights of the Cape and the Natal Asiatics which they have hitherto enjoyed without interference. The Union Government undertakes to satisfy the demands of the Transvaal passive resisters if the Imperial Government permits them to legislate against the Asiatics residing in the Cape and the Natal provinces,"

While the Bill was unacceptable to the Cape and Natal Indians and hence to their Transvaal compatriots, it evoked equally uncompromising opposition on the part of Free State members of the Union Parliament who could not accept General Smuts' declaration that "as a limited number of Asiatics would be allowed under the Bill, to enter the Union every year, there could be no limitation of their right to travel about or to settle in any part of the Union, territory;" and who wanted to provide for "the complete prevention of the entry of Asiatics into their Province." Gandhi resented their attitude. He declared "there can be no playing with the snake of racial legislation. The virus of racial legislation in the Orange Free State will speedily attack the whole Union." Lengthy telegrams and exhaustive letters were exchanged for weeks between Gandhi and general Smuts but no formula being found that would be acceptable to all concerned," the Provisional Settlement of 1911" was arrived at by which Gandhi agreed to advise his followers to suspend passive resistance and the Government undertook "to introduce satisfactory legislation in the 1912 session of Parliament"

- (1) to repeal Act 2 of 1907 except in so far as it protects the rights of minors; and
- (2) to restore legal equality as to the immigration, subject to administrative equality but upon condition that at least six educated Asiatics might enter the Transvaal in any one year.

As a result of this compromise the Passive Resisters still in gaol were released. All Indians sincerely believed that the peaceful end of the bitter struggle was

now assured ; and the *Star* announced that Gandhi, who had already arranged for his legal practice to be taken over by Mr. Ritch, would pass from public life, retire to his farm in Natal, to come, in spells of leisure, in closer contact with the philosophic musings of Tolstoy.

As promised by General Smuts, a fresh Immigration Bill was introduced into the Union Parliament. The Bill was in some respects better than the first but as it did not quite fulfil the promise made by General Smuts it did not meet the wishes of the Indians. It had to be dropped and the period of the "Provisional Settlement" was extended by one year. It was hoped that in the impending visit of Gokhale, a formula acceptable to all would be discovered.

Gokhale's visit (October 22nd—November 18th) to South Africa to study the Indian problem "carefully fairly and impartially" from the strictly South African, the strictly Indian and the Imperial stand-points was a three weeks' wonder in every sense of the term. The Union Government put on an air of hospitality and the African White viewed with the African Indian in welcoming "the Tolstoy of India." Mr. Runciman, of the Immigration Department was deputed to escort Gokhale throughout his stay in South Africa. Every public meeting, organized for Gokhale's reception, was presided over by the Mayor of the place who sometimes interspersed the inevitable and profuse compliments with mild warning not to "lighten fires." It was said that Gokhale had brought with him the much-needed rain which the parched land of Africa required so badly. Vegetarian banquets were arranged at Kimberley and Johannesburg where the European and the Indian, the lion and the lamb, ate and drank together. Gokhale

of course created a wonderful impression. What is surprising was that he himself was deeply impressed by this effusive hospitality; a White Colonist proved a better judge when he said, "I laughed; the humbug of the whole thing amused me. As soon as Mr. Gokhale has gone and the pressure from Downing Street relaxes, the anti-Asiatics will ill-treat and harass the Indians exactly as before."

Gandhi himself was under no illusion in the matter. He seized every opportunity of impressing upon the minds of his countrymen the fact that "the advent of Mr. Gokhale would not bring about the millennium." Nothing was so valuable as self-help.

From the moment of Gokhale's landing to that of his departure, Gandhi "constituted himself Mr. Gokhale's personal attendant, body-servant and private-secretary. He nursed, doctored, dieted and cooked for him, to the mingled gratification and discomfort of his distinguished guest who invariably looked upon Gandhi as his spiritual superior. Gokhale was exceptionally meticulous regarding public ceremonial and personal appearance and he was most particular always to have a well-folded and pressed scarf. Gandhi, who cared for none of these things, nevertheless, used patiently to iron Gokhale's scarves with his own hands, so that they should always appear fresh and proper."

To him, indeed, it was the opportunity of a life-time. "The name of Gokhale was sacred to him. Mr. Gokhale was his political teacher and whatever he had been able to do in the service of his fellow-countrymen was due to Gokhale." When Mr. Oats of Kimberley took Gokhale Gandhi and other leading Indians over his mine, Gandhi

said that he was no believer in millions and in diamonds but he realized that he was before Diamond Kings. Gokhale, however, was the brightest jewel India could present to them.

The net result of Gokhale's visit, besides "the full and frank exchange of views and better understanding," was the promise—afterwards denied—for the repeal of £3 tax, he extracted from General Smuts, General Botha and Mr. Fischer. The Union Ministers were pressed to put this promise to paper. They, however, said that as they had to consult the Opposition members, they could not do so. But though the Opposition members were favourably inclined the Ministers refused later, to carry out their promise.

And what was the £3 tax? It was a tax which every ex-indentured Indian was required to pay annually for the mere permission to live in Natal. The average income of a family of four—man, woman and two able-bodied children—was not more than £2 a month and they were required to part with half of their monthly income to the Government. Failure to pay the tax meant imprisonment and Gokhale used to feelingly mention a case where an old woman of sixty-five had to go to gaol six times for her inability to pay the tax. This "monstrous impost drove men into paths of wickedness and crime and women into paths of shame." Besides they had constantly to live in dread of the police and whatever they could "scrape together," they paid to the police and escaped. And the Union Government had not the humanity to remove this wicked tax even after their definite promise to Gokhale! Mr. Gokhale was therefore justified in saying that "the policy of the Colony is to harass the

people in every way so as to compel them to leave the country."

Misfortunes never come single; and while the promise of the repeal of the £3 tax was being recanted, while the fate of the provisional settlement of 1911 was hanging in the balance, a judgment was delivered in the Supreme Court which enraged the British Indians as nothing else did. One Hassan Esop of Port Elizabeth had visited India in 1908 and married Bai Miriam. He returned in 1909 without her but again in 1912 went to India to fetch her. When he returned with her to South Africa, the Immigration Officer refused to allow her to land and ordered that she should return to India. The case for the respondent (Government) was that the marriage was contracted according to the Mahomedan custom; *but the whole question was whether a wife married by Mahomedon custom was a wife within the meaning of the Immigration Act*; and His Lordship held that the marriage did not satisfy the Immigration Act and so that application of the husband for an order restraining the respondent from deporting the wife to India was refused! Gandhi knew that "the Government may not, dare not, follow up the case to its logical extent." But "no Indian can rest under the possibility of his wife's status being questioned"; and the whole community declared that they were prepared to revive passive resistance on this single issue, if necessary.

Gandhi had fondly hoped that the new (April 1913) Immigration Bill would be satisfactory to the Indian community and in his hopes he was strengthened by the repeated declarations of the Union Government

that they intended to carry out the terms of the settlement. But when the long-promised Bill saw the light of the day, he was disillusioned and disappointed.

"The Bill is worse than its predecessor and fails in material respects to give effect to the Provisional Settlement. The Bill confirms the suspicion that the Government only want to give us what they must, that they wish ill even to those, who have established rights in the Union and that by hook or by crook, they want to compass our ruin. In carrying out this ruthless policy they have gone as far as they dare. If the Bill becomes law, it will whittle away some of our cherished and existing rights and make our position, insecure as it already is, doubly so. Unless the Government yield and amend the Bill materially, passive resistance must revive and with it, all the old miseries, sorrows and sufferings. (It seems) we must learn the lesson again of finding pleasure in pain."

Into the innumerable technicalities of the Bill, the interminable correspondence and negotiations, the several amendments, it is unnecessary to enter here. The Government "strongly depreciated references to passive resistance" and added that "in view of the feeling throughout the Union, on matters under consideration, these threats would lead to results far different from those anticipated by the representatives of the Indian community in making them."

After a "stormy passage through both the Houses," the Bill, slightly amended but still unsatisfactory, passed into Law (June 1913). Undaunted and undismayed, Gandhi still opened fresh negotiations for

compromise; when they failed, passive resistance was declared. In making the announcement, Gandhi said:—

"The revival of the struggle must mean an extension of the programme. If the community must suffer, it is better that it does so for all the serious and well-understood grievances. The Gold Law prosecution in Krugersdorp betrays a desire on the part of the Government to drive the Indian trader. The administration of the new Act affords unmistakable proof of the Government's desire to put every obstacle in the way of an Indian, no matter of what standing, re-entering his province. The operation of the Licencing laws of Natal and the Cape aims at the extinction of the Indian trade and the retention of the £3 tax on ex-indentured Indians and perpetuates a scandal which the community is bound in honour to remove at any cost. The Colonial-born Indian's right to enter the Cape on the strength of their South African birth must be protected. The marriage law affecting Indian wives must be purged of its offensive character. Every one of these points is worthy of passive resistance. The fight, this time, must be for altering the spirit of the Government and the European population of South Africa. And the result can only be attained by prolonged and bitter suffering that must melt the hearts alike of the Government and of the prominent partner. May the community have the strength and the faith to go through the fire!"

The terrible sufferings out of which the Indian community had recently emerged—the financial loss alone amounted to nearly fifty lakhs of rupees—hardly gave hopes that the recruitment would be very extensive. But such is Gandhi's self-confidence that once his

mind is decided upon a particular course he would never look about him.

"This would be" he said, "our third campaign and I have no doubt that it would be the most brilliant of all, though it would involve much greater suffering and would be a protracted ordeal. . . . We wish to deceive neither ourselves, nor the Government. It is plain that in the impending struggle, we cannot count upon hundreds going to gaol. But what we might lack in numbers would be made up for, by the earnestness and the unconquerable will of the few. . . . No country in the world can afford to place all its children at the same time on the field. Ours is an Army of Peace. . . . But whether we have five hundred or fifty or five or even one true passive resister on the field, victory is ours."

On another occasion, while answering a critic who was trying his best to belittle the new campaign, he said:—

"You have reported that the passive resistance campaign is threatened with collapse. This statement will prove to be untrue even if there is *one* passive resister, earnest enough to carry it on, and I prophesy that so long as there is *one* passive resister left to fight, the points we are now fighting for, will be granted, not because of the strength of such solitary passive resister, but because of the invincible strength of the truth for which he will be fighting.

"My view of passive resistance is that it is impure so long as it has to depend upon any pecuniary assistance whatsoever. It is essentially a religious force; but I do not claim for the movement in which I am an humble participator that it has reached the purest stage.

When it does, it will be independent of any public demonstrations or resolutions of appeal. Our ideal is that Truth, in order to assert itself, need no such props."

Before the struggle was actually started, the Government was informed (12th September (1918) of the state of things and warned that passive resistance would be continued so long as :—

- (1) a racial bar disfigures the Immigration Act ;
- (2) the rights existing prior to the passing of the Act are not restored and maintained ;
- (3) the £3 tax upon ex-indentured men, women and children is not removed ;
- (4) the status of women married in South Africa is not secured ;
- (5) and generally so long as a spirit of generosity and justice does not pervade the administration of the existing laws.

Passive resistance meant courting imprisonment and that could be done in two ways : (1) crossing the Transvaal border, (2) hawking without license. But while 'skirmishes' were going on between the Government and the passive resisters in these two directions, Gandhi's resourceful brain was occupied with the thought of organising a strike of indentured labourers in Natal. The Government had resolved on a change in tactics. Like Lord Chelmsford's Government they did not want to allow the passive resisters to have any handle to fight with. They adopted (with numerous exceptions) an attitude of non-interference. Are Indians hawking without licenses? Let them. Do the Transvaal Indian ladies, anxious to court imprisonment as protest against the

slur cast on their respectability, cross the border, every minute expecting arrests? Let them have an "outing" and a pleasant time in Natal. In ordinary times, an Indian tresspasser at the coal-mines was liable to be shot; but now, male and female volunteers were allowed to move about unmolested in the mines, persuading the Indians at work to strike. The result was wonderful. More than three thousand indentured labourers struck work. The colliery-owners were frightened. They were in a most awkward situation. Their employees had no grievance against them. It was a strike which, though it paralyzed the coal-owners, was really directed against the Government. It was just like the Boycott of British goods which, though undertaken against the Indian Government, primarily strikes at the British capitalist. The situation might any moment become dangerous. The colliery-owners applied to the Government for additional police. With an assumed air of non-chalance the Government replied that there was no danger. To err on the safe side, the employers went to the length of supplying—an unusual course of conduct on occasions of strike—the strikers with rations until the Government intimated their intentions. A Conference of representative employers met Gandhi at the Chamber of Commerce where Gandhi made a statement on the strike. He emphasized the point that the strike was *not* a part of the general passive resistance struggle; the strike was necessitated by the Government's refusal to carry out the promise of repeal of the £3 tax made to Gokhale and as soon as the Government did the needful, the strikers would rejoin work.

When naturally the coal-owners asked the Government the nature of the promise and the reasons of its non-fulfilment, the reply came that "no such promise was given either to Mr. Gokhale or to anybody else." This was the third breach of solemn promise made by the Colonial Ministers. "Apparently they did not consider it dishonourable to fail to keep faith with a coloured man."

For a fortnight since October 16th, when the strike commenced, the situation was uncertain. But when once it was clear that the Government had no intention either of arresting the strikers or their leaders, Gandhi decided to turn the whole force to Transvaal and compel the Government to arrest one and all the 'invaders.' The Government kept quiet. They considered that the plan of "invasion" was a mere bluff. "Three thousand coolies would not even get sufficient food on the way." That was their idea and as a result they expected the whole affair to fizzle away. But the Indians were determined and from all parts of the Union, money and provisions of all kinds poured in. It was decided to march at the rate of twenty-five miles a day. If the Government arrested the law-breaking invaders—as it was their duty to do—the object of the march was accomplished; otherwise, at the end of the eight days' march the 'army' would reach Mr. Kallenbach's Tolstoy Farm and peacefully stay there as long as the Government wished.

Gandhi placed himself at the head of a vast commissariat department. It was no easy thing to lead the two thousand odd labourers from place to place and to provide for their food, water, and sanitary and other

arrangements. At every halting station, the municipalities were pre-informed of the arrival and Gandhi and his colleagues co-operated with the municipal and police officers in their efforts to preserve order, minimize disturbances and dislocations and prevent the irruption of an epidemic. During all these days and nights Gandhi worked like a giant. He knew no rest. He was the first to get up and the last to go to bed. From three or four in the morning till midnight he was incessantly working. It was a marvellous display of will-power. When all had gone to sleep, he would, like a solicitous mother, move about and would attend to their comforts in their sleep.

The *Sunday Post* thus describes Gandhi and his followers:—

"The pilgrims whom Mr. Gandhi is guiding are an exceedingly picturesque crew. To the eye, they appear most meagre, indeed, emaciated; their legs are mere sticks, but the way they are marching on the starvation rations provided, shows them to be particularly hardy. The rations are 1½lb loaf of white bread and a handful of sugar per day, per man. Notwithstanding the small amount of food provided from day to day, the marchers were, at any rate before the rain came, most cheerful and docile. Of the two thousand, some 1,500 walk together in a fairly compact body, the rest following in little groups of stragglers within two or three miles. Mr. Gandhi is looked upon with absolute veneration and is habitually addressed as Bapu.

"I found Mr. Gandhi in an evil-smelling back-yard of a tin shanty at Charlestown. Before him was a

rough deal table and at his side were twelve sacks containing 500 loaves of bread. Clad only in his shirt and trousers, Mr. Gandhi, with incredible rapidity, cut the loaves into three-inch hunks, made a depression with his thumb in the centre of each hunk, filled it with sugar from the bowl at his elbow, and passed them on to the waiting queue of Indians, who were admitted to the yard in batches of twelve. And all the while he explained his plan of campaign to me in perfect and cultured English, interspersing his remarks with learned reference to "Gladstonian liberalism" and other recondite subjects."

Finding that the invaders were steadily marching, the Government, anxious to demoralize his followers, issued a warrant for Gandhi's arrest. Gandhi was arrested on November 6th at Palmford and was motored to Volksrust where he was charged with breach of the Immigration Act. As a passive resister, he had been courted arrest and he got what he wanted. He even helped the police by pointing out some of his followers to give evidence as otherwise he could not be convicted. What, however, he was most concerned about was the condition in which his followers would be thrown by his arrest and he telegraphed to the Minister of Interior informing him that the marchers included 122 women and 50 children all voluntarily marching on starvation rations without provision for shelter during stages. He added that if untoward deaths occurred, especially amongst women with babies in arms, the responsibility will be Government's; and in conclusion he asked that either he might be allowed to continue march with his

followers or Government send them by rail to Tolstoy Farm and provide full rations for them."

Gandhi was released on bail, was re-arrested on the 8th November, again released on bail and again arrested on 10th November, the last day of the Great March. On the following day, he was tried before the Resident Magistrate at Dundee. He, of course, pleaded guilty. The Magistrate fined him £60. Gandhi did not pay the fine and was, hence, sentenced to nine months' rigorous imprisonment.

When Gandhi, at the head of the army of passive resisters, was arrested by Mr. Chamney, the Immigration Officer of Transvaal, with the assistance of two police officers, he was holding an important consultation with Mr. Polak who prior to his visit to India, had specially come for the purpose. Mr. Polak at once assumed the leadership of the "Army of Peace" and on the army proceeded, with Balfour as their immediate objective, where they reached at about 9 A. M. on the following day. At the sight of three special trains drawn up at the station, Mr. Polak's quick eye at once discerned that the Government had decided to arrest the march. Soon Mr. Chamney appeared and requested Mr. Polak to help him in arresting the passive resisters. The army was fed and then Mr. Chamney asked them as to their "proofs of rights of residence" and immediately declared them to be prohibited immigrants.'

The passive resisters had been expecting to march up to Johannesburg unmolested and when Mr. Chamney suddenly arrested them, for a moment there was confusion everywhere. It seemed that at the last moment of

the wearisome march effected with wonderful self-control, the passive resisters would lose self-control and would for ever soil the name of the cause. But the timely warning of Messrs. Polak and Cachalia brought them round and the men peacefully entrained [and eventually were sent back to Natal. Thus the wonderful March was over.

Messrs. Polak and Kallenbach shared the fate of their illustrious master and were arrested and sentenced to simple imprisonment.

The imprisonment of Gandhi acted like a signal and twenty thousand more labourers in Natal struck work. The news of this fresh strike caused consternation throughout the Union. Consternation led to repression repression to disorder and disorder to the spilling of innocent blood.

The wonderful March and the great strikers brought the question of the grievances of the British Indians in South Africa to the fore-front. Lord Hardinge placed himself at the head of movement in India, and in his historic Madras speech declared that "if the Union Government wished to justify itself in the eyes of India and of the world, the only course open was to appoint a strong impartial committee, whereon Indian interests will be represented, to conduct the most searching inquiry. The Secretary of State for India, too, was active, and the Union Government, anxious to save their faces, took the hint and accordingly on December 14th 1913, a commission, consisting of justice Sir Wm. Solomon (chairman), Mr. Ewald Esselen and Mr. J. S. Wylie, was appointed to inquire into Indian grievances. A week later the commission started its

work, called upon the Government of India to give evidence on their behalf and recommended to the Union Government, the release of Messrs. Gandhi, Polak, Kallenbach and other Indian leaders, confined in gaol. The recommendation was immediately carried out but the first thing Gandhi did after coming out of gaol was to express his dissatisfaction at the *personnel* of the commission. The Indian community was not represented; and more-over two notoriously anti-Indian Colonials were appointed to sit in judgment on the Indians. No evidence, therefore, could be given before the Commission. The Commission was to be boycotted.

The shedding of indentured blood during the recent strike deeply pained Gandhi. Gandhi always feels humiliated where others are required to suffer more than he has been privileged to do. From the time of his release till the settlement was effected, he, as penance, took only on meal a day and put on an indentured labourer's dress.

A revival of passive resistance was contemplated even while the commission was doing its work. But the idea was for a time dropped owing to the occurrence of the Railway strike and Gandhi's consequent refusal to embarrass the Government on occasions of its difficulties. Gandhi had a series of interviews with General Smuts who at long last realized the stern logic of facts. "As by granting me the recent interviews, the General has been pleased to accept the principle of consultation, it enables me to advise my countrymen not to hamper the labours of the commission by any active

propaganda and not to render the position of the Government difficult by reviving passive resistance.

Gandhi, however, was able to co-operate with Sir Benjamin Robertson who was deputed by the Government of India to put the Indian case before the commission.

The timely and non-official visit of the Rev. Mr. Andrews and Mr. W.W. Pearson to South Africa created a very great impression and was of great use in effecting a change in the angle of vision. This was the beginning of that brotherly relationship between "Charlie" and "Mohan" which is a triumph of the spirit of Universal brotherhood.

Whether, accordingly to the theory of Gandhi's *Satyagraha*, there was a betterment or melting of the hearts of the Union ministers and legislators might be a moot point, and a sceptic mind may even despair of finding any traces of the existence of such a thing as heart in twentieth century Imperialists and politicians, still the extensive strikes and the wonderful March created a deep impression on the minds of the South African Colonials which was mirrored in the report of the commission

Gandhi's only regret in boycotting the commission was that his beloved *Guru*, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, had repeatedly pressed him to lead evidence before it and to disappoint Gokhale in his then state of health was "as a stab in the living flesh." But where principles are concerned, Gandhi can compromise neither with man nor with God and the only reply he could make to Gokhale was "we are willing to die for you, if need be, but we can't give evidence before the Solomon Commission."

And he proved a wise prophet. The very boycott of the Commission on the part of Gandhi was more eloquent than his evidence would have been. By Gandhi's non-participation in the labours of the Commission, the Commissioners could quickly finish their investigations, otherwise more than three hundred Indian witnesses, with Gandhi at their head, would alone have taken six months and so the Relief Bill could not have seen the light of the day in the June session. His evidence would not have enabled the Commissioners to arrive at a better understanding of the principal points on which passive resistance was started, as the Commissioners strongly recommended for acceptance all the points raised by Gandhi.

What was even more important than even the opinions and inclinations of the Commissioners and the Ministers, and the one thing which emboldened them to take broad and statesmanlike view of the question, was the attitude of the White community at large. By the third, last and most glorious campaign of passive resistance, the eyes of that community were opened and they were in a hurry to heal the sore. So the Relief Bill could not but be sufficiently liberal. General Botha declared that the Government wanted to carry it through and would stand or fall by it. But there was no danger. An overwhelming majority voted for the Bill and thus ended the struggle started in 1906. Grievances still remained; and a few Extremists were still unreconciled. But the major grievances were removed and the rest could be safely to the inevitable adjustment of time. Gandhi's work in South Africa was over.

But the settlement, dear as it was to every heart, did not bring unalloyed joy. With it, came the remembrance that he who led the Indians to victory was about to leave (18th July 1914) the shores of South Africa. The farewell ceremonies—banquets, meetings presents, addresses, occupied a fortnight. Even the South African Press found it in itself to pay an ungrudging tribute to their departing opponent. The *Star* admitted that Gandhi have proved himself a singularly purposeful patriot and a strategist of considerable ability. By the *Transvaal Leader* and the *Rand Daily Mail* Gandhi was acclaimed as a saint, as one who lived upon a higher moral plane, an ascetic and a mystic (who however, as the *Pretoria news*, sarcastically reminded them "according to the municipal bye-laws, may not walk upon our foot-paths, ride in our trams or reside in our town"), Many distinguished Colonials joined in the celebrations and the encomiums, Mr. Snyman saying on one occasion, "a great man is great, whatever his race or creed, and as such, I honour Mr. Gandhi." All this kindness almost overwhelmed, Gandhi. But though his heart was overwhelmed, his head never turned—of the victory he would never take credit to himself:—

"If I merit any approbation, how much more those behind, who went into the battle with simple faith, with no thought of appreciation! What will you say to Harbatsingh, an ex-indentured Indian, seventy-five years of age, who was with me at Volksrust gaol! 'Why have you come,' I asked. 'How could I help it?' was his reply; 'in the evening of my days I am content to pass the rest of my life in prison to deliver my countrymen.' He remained in gaol and died there. What do you

think of the young lad, Narayansamy, whose parents came from what is falsely called the benighted presidency, Madras? He had never seen India except as a deportee; he starved for some days when he returned he died. And what of Nagappan?...He worked as a prisoner on the Africa Veldt in the bitter cold of winter when there was no sun. Unfit for work, he still held on, but at last he died. Then there is sister Valliamma, a girl of eighteen; she went to prison and was discharged when she was very ill. She died leaving thousands of Indians to mourn the loss."

There spoke the man! Though the hero of many battles, he would place his own name last and would like to lose himself in the magnified glory of the humblest of his followers!!

Gandhi had hurried to England to nurse Gokhale whose health was reported to be critical. By the time Gandhi reached London, Gokhale was slowly recovering from his illness. At the outbreak of the Great War (Aug. 1914) Gandhi, disregarding his own weak health was preparing to organise an Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps; but his friends, anxious to save him further strain, practically compelled him to return to India and from Jan. 1915, Gandhi's real Indian career begins.

Gandhi's twenty years of South African life form an uninterrupted record of Sacrifice. As he truly says:—

"The real meaning of sacrifice is not to be found in the altar and the pouring of ghee. Such sacrifice can only truly purify the atmosphere. Our very bodies must be given for the sacrifice and our life's blood must take the place of the ghee. That is real sacrifice which alone is acceptable to God."

CHAPTER VI

LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

As I grow older, I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things. I want to know what a great man eats and wears and how he speaks to his servants. I want to find a Sir Philip Sydney greatness! Few men would remember the thirst of others even in the moment of death.

Swami Vivekananda

ONE of Gandhi's greatest regret is that, practically against his wish, he was for twenty fruitful years of life, an exile from India. Though this long separation from the Motherland might not have given him as intimate a knowledge of his countrymen as he would desire and for which he has repeatedly expressed his regret, still, generally speaking we cannot be too thankful for this long residence in South Africa. Even when he went to Natal towards the close of 1902, it was, as he thought, only for a couple of months. But the pressure of friends, the innate chivalry of his nature and the inexorable call of work combined to tie him down to the South African sub-continent. It appeared, as if, Destiny was determined to keep him perforce in the work shop of Providence until he was fully shaped and

perfected. For one thing, the leadership of the Natal and the Transvaal Indians which was in a sense, forced upon him, gave him a training in public life which, no contact with any Indian leader, could have done. The breadth of his outlook and his singular freedom from prejudices, belonging to caste or creed, have been the direct outcome of his long stay in a country where Hindu, Moslem and Parsi had to stand shoulder to shoulder in meeting a common foe. The total absence of party-bias in him is also the result of his exile; that in 1915, he could begin his Indian career on a clean slate is due to the same cause. His very idealisation of India, her people, her religions, her civilisation, can be attributed to his long separation from his country; and it is difficult to conceive how in the stagnant waters of Indian public life, Gandhi would have been able to develop his spirituality or perfect his theory of *Satyagraha*. Gandhi, as he is and as we know him, is the child of the South African Struggle.

In one respect, his position was enviable from the very beginning. Excepting his few months' waiting at the Bombay bar, his worldly position was assured from the commencement of his career. At Rajkot, both in 1892 and in 1901-02, he could command a good *clientele*: his father's innumerable friends were his well-wishers. While at Durban, his practice was guaranteed by the leaders of the Indian community at Natal who wanted very badly both a legal and a political adviser; and thus he escaped those struggles which sap the buoyancy of so many noble natures. Another man in his situation would have degenerated into inglorious sloth or would have

exploited the situation for a very rapid advancement of his worldly interests. Gandhi did neither. Had he been a bit worldly-minded, he would have returned from South Africa with ten lakhs of rupees. But money had no charm for him. He gave away all—inside of a lakh—that he had saved and returned to India without a single pie which was *his*.

He lived like a prince. He kept a large establishment and his house was always full of guests. At Durban, he lived in the most central and fashionable part of the city. The Colonial magnates were his neighbours and his large house was situated just opposite to the residence of Mr. Escombe, the Attorney-General. He had access to the highest society. People came and went from morning till late at night. Even in these days of his youth, he lived, socially speaking, on a higher plane. His monthly expenditure easily exceeded Rs. 2,000.

But in the midst of this pomp and splendour, the student of Tolstoy was in evidence. He never kept a carriage. His tastes were very simple. Asceticism was a long way off; but its seeds were there. His suavity, courtesy, hospitality, were wonderful. Every new face was welcome; and every guest felt himself quite at home.

His instincts were social. He was not one of those who would prefer to shut themselves up in a room with a book. It was this social instinct that landed him into bad ways in boyhood. Then, he was led; he was not the leader. But soon there was a change. After his return from England, he not only won the love of people but their implicit obedience also. He

had a quiet strength about him, which, in spite of his unflinching modesty, never failed to impress others. His scrupulous and unwavering regard for truth gave him an advantage over every man with whom he came into contact. Even when practising in the Courts of Rajkot, he would not tolerate falsehood or deceit. At Durban the same rule held good. His loving nature drew people to him, his utter rectitude and truthfulness made them feel small in his presence and give him implicit trust and obedience.

In the Transvaal, Gandhi lived in Troyville, a suburb of Johannesburg, exclusively inhabited by the White gentry of the city. His land-lady was evidently not colour-blind, was highly pleased with her tenant and successfully resisted repeated efforts made by interested persons to drive the "coolie-king" to the Indian locations. It was a two-storeyed building having in all about ten rooms, including a spacious hall. He had furnished it "in European style but with the utmost simplicity and an eye to utility. There were no pictures hanging on the walls and in answer to a friend's remonstrance, charging him with deficiency in a sense of beauty, he replied 'on the contrary, can any picture excel Nature herself? And have we not Nature all around us? If we want more, have we not everywhere, the world of reality and beauty, of which the things that we see with our physical eye are but phenomena'? His office in Johannesburg, at the corner of Rissik and Anderson Streets, was except for the few pictures hanging on the walls, "meagrely furnished and dusty" "Over his work-desk he used to hang a framed picture of Jesus Christ. A friend once asked him the reason for

this, he being a Hindu. The substance of his reply was that Jesus, perhaps more than any other great Teacher, was the embodiment of Love, and he looked upon the essentials of His teaching as part of the common spiritual heritage of mankind."

"In one of the rooms on the entrance floor (of his house) he had set up an article of utility which occupied the centre of the room and was the only article it contained. This was an American machine for grinding wheat by hand and requiring the full strength of two persons. Every morning, he and the other male members of the household would grind the necessary quantity of wheat for the day's requirements. He regarded this daily task of wheat-grinding as both a religious duty and an aid to health. This form of exercise doubtless prepared him at a later stage and with his mind bent upon the simplification of life for the adoption of the policy of turning out (with the help of others) between Friday afternoon and the early hours of Saturday morning, each week, 2000 copies of the *Indian Opinion* by hand on a heavy printing machine ordinarily run on by oil engine."

His office in Johannesburg was a distance of about six miles from his house. For some time he used a cycle. But soon he gave it up, and walked the whole distance but never used rickshaws as he never liked men to be used as brutes. "He was very fond of walking long distance and it was no punishment to him that he could not avail himself of the exception that would have been made in his favour when the Johannesburg Tramway Company and later the Johannesburg Municipality prohibited his countrymen from the use

of tram cars. He refused to accept any privilege that the least of his countrymen could not equally share."

He left home at 7-30 A.M. without taking tea etc., reached his office at about 9 A.M. opened letters and dictated replies to the lady-typist. Miss Schlesin. This occupied him till 10-30 A.M. when he went to court. He lunched at 1 P.M. The luncheon consisted of fresh and dried fruits—banannas, grapes, groundnuts, dates and many others—and took one full hour, as his assistants and a number of missionary and other friends were invariably present to partake of his hospitality and conversation. "These fruits and uncooked food meals were notorious and there never seemed a dearth of food or of guests." He left office after 5 P.M. reached home at 7 P.M. and took the usual Gujarati supper in the company of friends and family-members. "His family was larger than that of most people, for he kept open house and often invited close friends to live with him and regarded them just as much related to him as his blood connections. This was especially noticeable at his home in Darban, during the Boer war, when many of his friends, both Indian and European, were refugees from the Transvaal."

Every Sunday and holiday, he had a regular feast at his house in which a dozen or score friends and co-workers participated.

Gandhi's application (1894) for enrollment at the Supreme Court, Natal, was strenuously opposed by the Natal Law Society. It was said that coloured barristers could not be admitted. "The Supreme Court laughed at this argument" and Gandhi was allowed to practise. At Durban, his *clientele* is said to have

included not only coloured litigants but several Europeans also. He was held in high respect, both by the judges as well as by the members of the bar. In the Transvaal, where race-prejudice was deeper, the majority of his clients were Indians.

As a lawyer, he was distinguished most by his exceptional probity. The limited sphere of life, Indians were allowed to occupy in the Transvaal, had its effect on the nature of the litigation that came to Gandhi. In 'political' cases and in cases involving commercial law-points, he highly distinguished himself by the keenness and subtlety of his arguments and sometimes extorted praise from the judges themselves. He was an expert cross-examiner and "seldom failed to break down a dishonest witness." He was however, equally strict with his own clients and it was part of his agreement with them that if at any stage of the court-proceedings, he discovered that they had deceived him he would immediately throw down his briefs. This express agreement, together with several instances that actually happened, created an impression and he was seldom pestered by clients whose cases were *Prima facie* wrong. He always "advised his clients to settle with their opponents out of court, and again and again his services as arbitrator between his clients and their opponents were gladly called upon by both sides." When a certain person, who had stolen gold, consulted him, he unhesitatingly advised him to plead guilty. A certain Natal trader was once charged with having smuggled goods. Having carefully investigated the truth, Gandhi advised him to surrender, not only those goods for which he was charged but also the merchandise

he had successfully smuggled ; and so pleased was the Officer at the conduct, that he withdrew the charges much to the satisfaction of Gandhi. But withdrawal or no withdrawal, conviction or release, his conduct was uniform.

In the course of his life in Natal, his average monthly practice easily exceeded £150. His Transvaal practice brought him more than £4,000 a year. The average monthly practice amounted to about £300. When poor persons were concerned, he charged very low fees or did not charge at all; and his fees for securing Permits—such cases alone gave him nearly £200—were only £2, though very often the work involved was not inconsiderable. Had he been worldly-minded, he could have earned double his income.

“He made it a practice never to issue a letter of demand against a client who made default in payment of moneys due to him personally. He refused to invoke the powers of the court on his own behalf and when questioned about this, he used to remark philosophically : ‘ If the man is honest, he will pay, If he is dishonest, my suing him will not make him honest but only afraid, It is my own fault for not having insisted, at the time, upon payment.’ This attitude must have cost him not less than £ 1,500.

Practising lawyers will be pleased to learn that from “ an intellectual point of view, Gandhi held the practice of law in high esteem for its own sake and as a means of technical equipment for public work.” He also “ regarded with admiration the administration of justice by the British Courts.”

His adoption of the Tolstoyan view-point, together

with what he saw in India of touts and canvassing, convinced him of the moral uncleanness of the profession, though he knows that a resolutely moral nature can, if it chooses, remain perfectly pure.

He considers that lawyers and doctors have received an importance, out of all proportion to the indirect services to the community rendered by them. He knows that the lawyer is bound to remain but would like if he (lawyer) would maintain himself in some other way and give legal advice gratis.

He gradually shed his practice. In 1907, he discovered the ideal of his life and summed up his spiritual longings in one word—*Satyagraha*. In 1910, he had already stopped practice and was being supported by a European friend. His total savings have been, from time to time, given to the public cause. The Phoenix Settlement alone has claimed £. 5,000.

Gandhi has very slowly and very steadily gravitated to the religious life. As a result, there have been no hasty steps. His spirituality is not of the hot-house kind. Emotional and impressionable, no doubt, he is; but his spiritual progress is more the result of reason and deliberation. First his vegetarianism and then his experiments in dietetics have led him to perfect simplicity in diet and rigid control of the palate. His dress tended more and more to simplicity, and in 1913, he put on the indentured labourer's dress. He kept his family-people mostly at Phoenix (Natal) and visited them at intervals.

He never failed to act up to his convictions. He had insured his life for Rs. 10,000 in 1901. But he soon thought it morally wrong to expect (of course, in case of

pre-mature death) money from the insurance Company out of all proportion to one's paid up premiums. Thinking this to be a kind of gambling, he stopped (about 1904) sending his premiums to the Company.

Though he was never muscular or strong, he was exceptionally healthy. During his nearly eight years' life in Durban (1894-1901), he was, excepting for piles from which he suffered occasionally, uniformly healthy. His capacity to work, his powers of endurance, were probably the result of his enthusiastic nature and strong will-power. Times without number, his nervous system has been put to some test or other, and every time he has come out of the trial, mentally refreshed though sometimes physically impaired. His vitality and recuperative power are wonderful. Once, towards the close of his South African career, when Gandhi took the vow of a fortnight' fast—probably his first fast—none dared hope that he would survive that penence. But even when he was exhausting his system at once by fasting and hard work, he did not collapse. His co-workers in the Indian Ambulance Corps, at the time of the Anglo-Boer War, are never tired of paying a tribute to Gandhi's powers of physical work and endurance; whatever the occasion, be it an order to march thirty or forty miles at a stretch or the need of nursing the wounded without rest during the whole of a night, he was never found wanting and put in greater work than many of his physically stronger assistants.

In Mrs. Gandhi, he has found, what a Hindu would regard as, an ideal wife. Serene, gentle, loving and modest, she has never proved a drag on her husband's

idealism and has cheerfully co-operated in all the innumerable experiments made by him. Dignified in adversity, she has been uniformly meek in prosperity. She has lived not only with him but in him and for him also. Gandhi's ideas of Indian woman-hood have been largely influenced by his home experiences. As a son and as a husband, he has found what a purifying, ennobling and sustaining influence is exerted by a woman. Though probably he would be the last man to fetter woman to marriage as the only ideal of life, still he knows what a comparatively easy task a married woman has in finding her salvation by helping her husband in seeking his. In his youth, female education was almost a superstition, especially with England-returned gentlemen, and a barrister would have been ashamed to own that his wife did not know English. Gandhi cares more for character than for intellectual education; and though he is said to have made some attempts to teach English to her himself, still recently he is reported to have expressed his satisfaction that she was not a very diligent student.

Gandhi has four sons—Harilal, Manilal, Ramdas and Devidas. He has placed before his sons the same ideals of spiritual elevation to which he has dedicated his own life. It has been said that the last infirmity of a spiritual mind is the lingering solicitude for the worldly welfare of one's children. But Gandhi has submitted his children to the same iron discipline which he has prescribed for himself. All except the eldest are unmarried and it is Gandhi's ambition that they should remain so; for if there is any quality he prizes as high as Truth and Love, it is *Brahmacharya*. From

a worldly stand-point, Gandhi has neglected the well-being of his sons. He has not cared to give them academical training. The pre-occupation of the Transvaal struggle is not the sole cause of this seeming neglect. Gandhi could have sent them home (India) for education. Gandhi does not despise intellectual training but he certainly prefers moral development to booklore; and he was far too much bent on the moral awakening of his sons by their participation in the Transvaal struggle to give them opportunity to cultivate their brains in the unstimulating atmosphere of a College Residency in India. Before he has asked (1920) students to non-co-operate, he has, time and again, taught his sons to suffer. He has set the same rule to others as he has prescribed to his own sons.

Gandhi is immensely fond of rendering personal service to the ailing; and here he presents a refreshing contrast to Ruskin who, in spite of his lecture-room love for the sufferers, could hardly dare enter a sick-room; and with his sense of art and beauty in externals, this was but natural. Gandhi's sense of the beautiful is more internal than external, more emotional than merely physical. In his early youth, he had to nurse his father in his prolonged illness. In the Anglo-Boer war, Gandhi led an Ambulance Corps. In 1902, when there was an outbreak of plague in Rajkot, Gandhi headed a movement for relief. The same happened when plague broke out in the Johannesburg locations (1904). In the Zulu rebellion of 1906, his humanitarian services were again in evidence. In 1914, in spite of broken health, he was on the point of organizing an Ambulance Corps. He wanted to attend the sick-bed

of Gokhale. More than once, he has nursed back to life his wife amid heavy political work. Be the calls on his time never so numerous, Gandhi has always found time in attending the sick-beds of all those near-by; and Gandhi's attendance is never a do-nothing patronizing thing. He will sit up hour after hour, attend to all the patient's requirements and will not shrink from the meanest services. All this is spiritual *Sadhana* to him. He is a born nurse.

When it became increasingly clear to Gandhi that his residence in South Africa would be indefinitely prolonged and that he would have to organise an effective movement for the political and social uplift of his countrymen, he decided to start (1903) a weekly newspaper, the *Indian Opinion*. The paper was originally conducted in English Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil. The number of subscribers was hardly a little over 500, and the conduct of that paper in four different languages in a not-very-cheap place like Durban was responsible at the end of the first year, for the heavy deficit of £1,200 which Gandhi ungrudgingly paid. The Hindi and Tamil columns were now discontinued and soon the press and office were removed from Durban (where the up-keep of the press-establishment alone required more than £120 p. m.) to Phoenix, which was decidedly cheaper. Yet every year Gandhi had to pay some deficit. In 1910, the deficit was as much as £600, though the number of subscribers had gone up to over 2000. Towards the close of 1912, Gandhi decided to stop advertisements in the paper. He freely contributed to the English and Gujarati columns of the paper. His Gujarati contributions are almost identical in style and

sentiment to his *Navajivan* articles. His articles in English, though written substantially in the vein of the *Young India*, are not so impersonal or restrained. They, however, unmistakably reveal the "Gandhi brand."

The history of the *Indian Opinion* brings us to the history of the Phoenix Settlement. Phoenix is a village situated at a distance of about twelve miles from Durban. With Tolstoy, Nature was first love; with Gandhi, it is second love. The longer he lived in cities, the stronger became his conviction of the general depravity of city-life and the necessity of resorting to quiet places for the quest of God. The necessity of finding a cheaper locality for printing the *Indian Opinion* hastened the purchase of about hundred acres of land at Phoenix. It was the dream of Gandhi's early life in the Transvaal to be able to complete the political struggle, retire from legal practice and repair to the stimulating solitude of Phoenix for spiritual meditation; and he has devoted all his savings from 1903 (£5,000) to the development of the Phoenix Settlement. It was only in 1913, that he went to live at Phoenix; till then he could visit it only off and on, to spend days of quiet happiness in company with wife, children and near relatives. Through the devotion of his German friend, Mr. Kallenbach, he was able to taste all the sweets of country-life, when living in Johannesburg.

Gandhi is not a *litterateur*. He is no scholar. He does not love reading for the sake of reading. He is however an earnest, keen and tenacious thinker. The eternal problem of life has claimed his attention ever since his youth and almost all his extra-professional

reading has been confined to religion, in the widest sense of the term. The study of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Mazzini, Carlyle, Emerson, has taken him to the confines of Economics, Politics, Sociology, Jurisprudence and many other subjects. He has a wide range of conversation and his views on important subjects are always refreshing and original. His dialectical skill is of the highest order. He has the invaluable gift of going straight to the heart of a subject. Though an idealist by nature, he never delights in mere hair-splitting. He is an excellent story-teller and would have been an excellent story-writer also. He, however, has had neither the time nor the ambition to work in the literary field. To break the monotony of political writings in the *Indian Opinion*, he has contributed to its Gujarati columns translations of Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, Plato's *Trial of Socrates*, Tolstoy's stories etc. His principal original contributions are the *Hind Swaraj* and the *Guide to Health*. These pamphlets contain the experiences of his life and as such, are invaluable.

Among Gandhi's European friends in South Africa the foremost place must certainly be given to Mr. H. Kallenbach, a wealthy partner of an engineers' firm at Johannesburg. It was at the Theosophical Club and the restaurant that was attached to it at Johannesburg that Gandhi became acquainted with Mr. Kallenbach. Through Gandhi's influence, Mr. Kallenbach came to revere Tolstoy and his teachings. During the whole of 1907, when on account of the "voluntary registration compromise," Gandhi's life was in danger, he constituted himself as the body-guard of Gandhi, and in spite of Gandhi's protests, never left him except

when Gandhi was working in his own office. Once Gandhi had an unexpected call to the court and while he was preparing to go, in came Mr. Kallenbach, duly informed of the call by Miss Schlesin. Gandhi was surprised to see him at that odd hour and asked him the reason of his visit ; and when he knew it, both began to laugh. On another occasion, while Gandhi, accompanied by Mr. Kallenbach and Mr. Chhaganlal Gandhi, was going to Mr. Essop Mia, he met a missionary friend. Leaving Gandhi to talk with the friend, Mr. Kallenbach and Mr. Chhaganlal stood waiting on the opposite foot-path when the quick eye of Mr. Kallenbach observed two Mahomedans rapidly approaching Gandhi. In a twinkling he pounced upon the supposed murderers, caught them both in his clutches and would not let them move. But the Mahomedans happened to be devoted friends instead of would-be murderers and when the curious conduct of Mr. Kallenbach was explained, there was no end to laughter. This excess of zeal only shows the devotion and reverence, Mr. Kallenbach had for his great friend.

Mr. Kallenbach had purchased a large farm (nearly 1100 acres in extent) near Lawley (twenty-two miles from Johannesburg) and this he placed at the disposal of indigent passive resisters (1910). Gandhi acclaimed the idea, and was one of the first to take his residence to the farm which was now called the "Tolstoy Farm." Saturated with the spirit of Tolstoy, Mr. Kallenbach had already shed his militant tendencies ; and on his farm, shooting, use of machinery and of hired labour, were prohibited. Gandhi lived here for nearly three years and used to go to his office at Johannesburg daily by railway.

Mr. H. S. L. Polak was another intimate friend and co-worker. Gandhi has taken a brotherly interest in Mr. Polak and Mr. Polak has returned this love with his able and assiduous chamionship of the Indian cause. Being a member of a once much persecuted race, Mr. Polak's heart could spontaneously go to the Indian in distress. The South African Indians owe much to his brilliant pen and eloquent tongue.

There were several other friends—Mr. L. W. Ritch, the Rev. Mr. Phillips, the late Rev. Mr. Doke, Among Indian friends at Johannesburg and Durban may be mentioned, Messrs Parsee Rustomji, Essop Mia, Dada Abdulla, Ahamed Cachalia, Thambi Naidoo, Imam A. K. Bawazeer and Madanjit. These and many others not only enthusiastically co-operated in all the political work that fell to Gandhi's share, but also did their best to make his social life as happy as possible.

CHAPTER VII

TIT-BITS

BY AN ENGLISH FRIEND

ONE special incident stands out fresh in my memory. A big meeting was held just after one of the temporary settlements of the Indian question in the Transvaal. After the meeting, Mr. Gandhi and a European friend were at the door of the hall together and just as they stepped outside, a shifty-looking Indian came close up to Mr. Gandhi and some words in Gujarati passed between them. A moment or two later, the three proceeded down the street. Then something gleaming passed from the man's hand to Mr. Gandhi's, and the man went off. The European friend, being ignorant of Gujarati, did not understand what had been passing but felt that there was a serious note somewhere and when the man had gone away, she turned to Mr. Gandhi and said "who was that? I do not remember seeing him before."

"That" replied Mr. Gandhi, "was a poor, misguided man who thought he wished to do me an injury."

"Do you an injury? What for?"

"He thought I was betraying our people and selling them to the Government and so he thought it was his duty to kill me."

"To kill you?" she said incredulously.

"Yes. He was to stab me with this knife as I came from the Hall to-night. But he would not really have done it. You see he has given me the knife after my talk with him for one minute. He is only a poor mad-man."

The friend never heard that Mr. Gandhi told this incident to any-one else.

Another instance of Mr. Gandhi's courage and trust in Providence occurred after he had recovered from the brutal attack by a country-man in Johannesburg about this time. Mr. Gandhi had gone down to Durban, and he had been warned that there was a group of his countrymen there who regarded him with such hostility that if he attempted to address a public meeting, he would be violently attacked and perhaps killed. Mr. Gandhi persisted, nevertheless, in attending the meeting, and as had been anticipated, some ruffians attempted to storm the platform and attack Mr. Gandhi. He was entirely fearless but in the confusion of the meeting; his friends managed to hustle him out of the building much against his desire.

So often danger seemed to be threatening his life that one wonders how he escaped all the evils that appeared to be hanging over him. After the savage assault on him in 1908, when, but for some guardian angel, he would have ceased to function on the physical plane, he refused to say a word in condemnation of the man who had struck him but always prayed that those who sought to injure him should be forgiven, and that the light of knowledge would dispel the dark clouds in the minds of those who feared or hated him so that the

Divine in them should show forth. During the days that followed the assault, whilst he was lying on a sick-bed and being cared for in the house of Mr. Doke, and when he lay helpless and in acute pain, not one word of impatience ever crossed his lips. He smiled upon all those who came to see him and remembered in most cases some little personal thing to say, which made one feel so near him. Nor during this period would he depart from his principle of avoiding medicines. Although urged by his friends to take simple remedies he obstinately refused to do so, using only earth poultices and resigning himself to Mother Nature to heal him of his sickness. At all hours of the day or night, people would come to him for advice or help, nor did he ever refuse to see them or help them, however tired he might be. In no way did he believe in a life of ease or comfort. At the same time, he did not sense discomfort in the way that most of us do, for he lived in a world where the physical was subject to the inward or spiritual man.

How fine was his love of truth! A deliberate lie wounded him more deeply than anything else. He once had a ward, whose care he undertook, who deceived him and lied to him in excuse. He was not angry with the person, but only filled with sorrow that he seemed to be failing in his trust in keeping his ward truthful and good, and he said "I must be wrong somehow that I have not taught you better, so if you lie to me again, I must punish myself. I shall fast to expiate my sin of omission." After a few weeks, this ward lied to him again, and he carried out his threat fasting until too weak to stand or move. He strove to

save this other soul by sacrificing himself, and when he recovered, he had a feeling of greater tenderness than ever towards the weak soul entrusted to his care. A feeling of exultation seemed to possess him, for he believed that by his sacrifice, he had rescued a falling soul and placed it in a safe harbour. Alas, however, for the weakness of human nature! Before many weeks had passed, he found that this same person had deceived him even in the avowal of repentance, and was betraying all he believed to be holy and good. Even then, he uttered no condemnation of the person, seeking only, extenuating circumstances, although utterly condemning the acts of transgression, deceit and wrong.

Another instance of this love of real truth was shown when a European friend pleaded ignorance on the part of some one that Mr. Gandhi had believed in, and in whom he was also deceived.

"Ah," he said sorrowfully, "that is the horror of it. She did not know how wrong she was. If she had known and deliberately had done wrong, there would be hope for her. But she has never seen the truth. How, then, can she grow to it? For, the one that sins, knowing it is sin, there is the possibility of redemption, but for the one that knows not that he sins, what hope is there, until knowledge comes? No, in saying—did not know you have uttered the greatest condemnation of her that you could."

Those who knew Mr. Gandhi, in South Africa and before, over a period of years, would have noted well-marked differences of clothing, each phase representing an attitude of mind. As a student in London, he

dressed as fashionably as circumstances permitted. Later, in South Africa, he clothed himself in European costume except the head-gear which was a flat, black, professional turban, by which he could be easily distinguished anywhere. He did not wish to be too conspicuous or to offend European susceptibilities too much, but he also did not desire to cut himself off from his compatriots in matters of dress. So he chose this compromise. Though in Johannesburg, he would dress in somewhat cheap, ready-made clothing, when he came to London on diplomatic missions on behalf of his countrymen, in 1906 and 1909 he dressed in the conventional manner of an English gentleman, with tall silk-hat, frock-coat and, for dress occasions, starched shirts and collars, tail-coat and low-cut waist-coat the recognized evening-dress apparel of Westerners. His appearance was very smart. But upon his return to south Africa, being already in the throes of a spiritual experience in which he produced "*Hind-Swaraj*," he dressed less and less in the mode and with an ever-increasing simplicity. From then, until the present-day scantiness of clothing, there were a number of intermediate stages. During the latter part of the Passive Resistance Struggle in South Africa, when he was advocating the cause especially of the ex-indentured coolies, he deemed it his duty to share all their privations, even to dressing coarsely as they did. Many of his Western friends remonstrated with him and some people even regarded his change as a mere pose for the advertisement of his cause. Those, however, who knew him, were satisfied that this was quite untrue. The man who could reduce himself to one meal a day

for nearly a year in which he was fighting the Union Government for a settlement, was obviously in a condition of "at-one-ment" with the coolie and therefore refused to separate himself from him by such outward forms as dress.

Though never a member of the Theosophical Society, he had a large number of friends who were Theosophists and he gave to the various Lodges, in Durban and Johannesburg a great deal of help at one time or another by lecturing or taking part in their proceedings that were open to the public, or even procuring lectures for them, usually on some subject relating to Hinduism or comparative religion. During the Boer War, when Durban Theosophists were meeting in unsuitable surroundings, he reproved some friends for holding their meetings in this inappropriate way and suggested changes which were subsequently carried out by them, to their no small spiritual advantage, in his opinion.

He was an ardent vegetarian and did a great deal of propaganda on behalf of Vegetarianism both in the matter of subscribing to vegetarian societies and publications and in inducing many friends to become vegetarian or more rigorously so. He often, in his earlier days, wrote and spoke on the subject, and in some of the photographs taken of him at the time, he is seen wearing the membership badge of the London Vegetarian Society. He did a great deal, too, by financial support, to encourage the establishment, in Johannesburg, of Vegetarian restaurants, losing his money in the experiments.

His pride in handicrafts was demonstrated when he was leaving South Africa. He had met General Smuts

in Capetown during the later stages of the negotiations for the 1914 settlement, and had then invited the General to visit Tolstoy Farm and see the work that the Passive Resisters had been doing there. And when he learnt that General Smuts could not spare the time, he made arrangements for some of his colleagues to wait upon the General and personally present to him a pair of sandals made at Tolstoy Farm.

Mr. Gandhi was not satisfied until he had tried a number of kinds of work by hand from wood-sawing to sandal-making. On one occasion, whilst sawing a heavy log of wood, the end fell upon his foot, badly wounding him. He immediately fainted but upon recovery, was in great pain, which he suffered uncomplainingly. Asked afterwards whether he had suffered much agony at the time, he astonished his questioner by telling him that he had felt no pain at all that moment, being so constituted physically that his senses left him before they could register intense pain and that physical martyrdom had no terrors for him.

During his stay in South Africa, he made a special study of the science of domestic sanitation and refuse-removal. He always held that Indians had not yet learnt how to live in cities but were still living mentally and habitually in the village-state. His various experiments stood him in great stead later during his campaign in Champaran. During his early days in Johannesburg, the removal of refuse by the sanitary bucket-system was in vogue, under the control of the Municipality. Mr. Gandhi, however, soon came to realize the close connection, especially after the outbreak of plague in the Indian quarter largely due to municipal neglect,

between domestic health and clean sanitary arrangements. As his first duty of the day, therefore, he used personally to cleanse the earth-closet, and when, now and again, he had occasion to leave Johannesburg he would confide this highly unpleasant but very necessary task, as a sacred trust, to an intimate English friend living with him.

Mr. Gandhi was ordinarily a fair correspondent, but his letters written in a large and none too legible hand writing were always of the briefest and most business-like character. When his closest friends used to complain of the rarity of his correspondence, he would reply humourously, 'why complain? You, who are nearest and can understand me best, do not need me so much as others to whom I have to explain things.

When Mr. Gandhi returned from a visit to England, in 1909, he seemed greatly impressed by what he had seen of the Women's Suffrage Movement there. He had come into intimate touch with many of its most prominent leaders and was convinced that they were in the right and were on the road to win what they desired. Mrs. Despard particularly impressed him and later on, when the spiritual resistance movement led by her was in full swing, he said that he had learned from Mrs. Despard and her party, many lessons for his own campaign. So often he said that he had learned his most valuable lessons from women. He always seemed to think of woman as the spiritual fighter and the one who would succeed in bringing the Kingdom of Love to earth.

In his professional work, he was the soul of honour and a very hard worker. He never went into court unprepared and the courts, where he practised, were

accustomed to look upon his eases as worthy of special attention because of the helpfulness that he brought to their discussion. His professional capacity and integrity were highly thought of, both by the courts and by his colleagues.

While Mr. Gandhi believed intensely in the celibate life as the highest which mankind is capable of and the ideal to which it should ever strive to attain, it, nevertheless, seemed to give him joy to hear of the marriage of suitable young people and he almost invariably welcomed the coming of a baby to the young parents. On one occasion, soon after a conversation with a European lady-friend on the celibate life and the end of physical birth, some mutual friends gave him the news of the birth to them of a second child. He was staying at the time quite near these people, whilst the lady-friend was living some miles away. When she next went to see Mr. Gandhi, she specially refrained from mentioning the new baby, thinking that, perhaps, the new birth might have offended his sense of propriety, having regard to the strong views that she knew him to hold. But after a short time, he said, "you have not asked about the addition to our midst. Don't you want to go and see the baby?" And they went together to see it.

On another occasion, hearing that some intimate friends had had sleepless nights with a strong-willed infant that was being weaned, he waited till the parents were asleep, then took the child out of the cot, put him to sleep next to his own couch, nursed him throughout the night, and continued to do so, night after night, until the child was completely weaned.

Always he seemed to love to have children round him. Children came to him quite fearlessly and as of right, nor no place was sacred where Bapuji was known to be present. Their noise never worried him, and in the midst of intense philosophic thinking or very intricate political argument, if a child came running to him, he would stop to pat its head or say something in a gentle tone to make it smile. Only once did I know him to be cross with a child, and that was when a boy was deliberately cruel to another child. Then Mr. Gandhi got really angry and asked some one nearby to administer physical chastisement upon the boy, who had set out to hurt another, weaker than himself. It was almost a solitary instance of a resort to corporal punishment. Usually, Mr. Gandhi, as has been previously mentioned, preferred to punish himself for the fault of those dependent upon him, as having himself failed in his duty towards them.

He was invariably sterner in his attitude towards his own children than to the children of others. Sometimes and this especially in the earlier days, he would reprove them very severely for what some might have regarded as a minor fault. It was because of this that an old friend once described him as "the 'mild cow and the ferocious tiger.'" But the family-life was very sweet and it always had a religious atmosphere, for to him, spiritual religion was everything. He often sent his boys to learn hymns from some Christian friend, because he so deeply appreciated the religious contents of these hymns.

Probably, Mr. Gandhi is one of the very rare men in the world who could have the most intimate friendship

with a woman and yet both of them keeping absolutely untouched by human passion. He called forth the same passionless love from the women themselves as he was capable of, towards them. Sex had no place whatever in these friendships, and unlike so many of the so-called platonic friendships between men and women, there was none of the mental excitements, it usually stimulates. Mr. Gandhi met men and women alike on the broad platform of a common humanity. Many women in close touch with him lost all sense of sex-consciousness and could be in talk with him for hours on the most intimate themes without a single stirring of the physical emotions in active recognition. This very sexlessness brought a calm and hope to many women who went to him in trouble or illness of mind or body. Everywhere and with all people, he sought to create an atmosphere of holiness in regard to all the activities of life.

Once, when a European lady was arguing with him about the position of women in India and telling him that she considered them little better than slaves and toys, he replied "that is because, you of the West cannot imagine that woman or the feminine really rules in India". "But" continued the lady, "even in the *Shastras* it is deemed right and good for man, when he has accomplished so many years of work in the material world, to go into the silence to get into touch with the Infinite. On the other hand, you never release women from the chain of circumstances." "There is no need" gently replied Mr. Gandhi, "for her to retire from the world to get into touch with God. She always is. Any good woman's whole life is one of self-surrender

and sacrifice and the few years of silence necessary for man are not necessary for her."

On another occasion, this same lady was again discussing the relative positions of the Eastern and the Western women, and said to him, "the whole difference lies in this, that conduct in the West is based upon the Greek allegory of Orpheus, who, after the God had taken from him his beloved, Euridice by death, wrestled by his own strength and sacrifice in giving life to her again. In the East, conduct is subtly ruled by the allegory of Savitri who fought the God of Death for the return of life of her beloved. In the one case it is the man who is to serve woman and protect her, in the other, it is the woman that has to save man," "But" interrupted Mr. Gandhi smilingly, "is not that difference the very point I wish to make? It has always been recognized in India that woman is nearer to the gods. It is she who wrestles with them and conquers, and she, who can teach man the way in which he should go Savitri, in her love and strength and devotion, is a much more beautiful figure than Euridice."

He was a born healer. Had he studied, still further, the science of healing and devoted himself to it, he would probably have established a school of healing which would have been a blend of psycho-analysis, natural treatment, fruit-diet and massage. He could have had, as a healer, a tremendously large following wherever he had chosen to settle. Nor was he content to practise his art upon others, He practised it at home first of all upon those nearest and dearest to him. During the voyage to South Africa from India of

Mrs. Gandhi and her children in 1904, one of the children fell and lacerated his wrist. The injured member became much inflamed and so serious was its condition that the doctor advised amputation, in order to save the arm. This Mrs. Gandhi refused to allow, pending arrival in Johannesburg. Then Mr. Gandhi examined the injured wrist and found it in a condition of intense inflammation and turning blue, with all possibility of gangrene setting in. He promptly applied fresh clay poultices to the open wound, according to the methods advocated by the principal exponents of Nature cure, and eventually he had the satisfaction of seeing the wound heal up and complete power restored to the injured limb.

His experiences of doctors and surgeons did not make him much enamoured of them or their methods and possibly he was a somewhat harsh critic. On one occasion the son of a poor Indian client was ill with a bad abscess, which the doctor said ought to be lanced. Believing that the operation was a small one, he agreed to be present, with the doctor's consent, at the parent's request. But the doctor's lancet went too deep, severed an artery and the boy's life-blood spurted all over Mr. Gandhi who watched helplessly the youth succumb under the operation, to the nonchalant comment of the operator and the agony of the parents. He always declared that, if that was surgery, it was lawful murder. There is no doubt that the episode created a tremendous impression upon an already hyper-sensitive mind.

So many people loved to get an hour's talk with him, especially during or immediately after a meal. Even

when others lost their tempers, as they sometimes did Mr. Gandhi kept his, never getting angry or heated. He was so sure of himself and that he saw the truth, at least for himself, that he had no need to grow impatient with others who had not yet grown to it. But these evenings were not always heavy and ponderous, nor were they joyless. Much fun and laughter would ripple round the table, Mr. Gandhi himself joining in the jests and seeing the point of a joke even when told against himself. The cartoons that appeared in the South African papers, caricaturing him, used to make him shout with laughter. He would especially point out the humorous allusions and find great amusement in any exaggerated peculiarities of his own.

Stern as he was as regards his own standards of conduct, he was charity and tolerance itself towards the conduct of others, if they persisted honestly in a course of which he did not fully approve. He well understood the weaknesses of human nature, and he has often been known to excuse to third parties the actions of others which he has privately condemned to the latter. Men and women, Europeans and Indians alike, habitually made him their confidant and confessed to him their most secret thoughts and desires. He would commend or expostulate, encourage or condemn, but he always understood and gave comfort and often peace of mind. One thing he would never suffer without stern rebuke and that was, uncharitable and cruel criticism. Then his indignation flamed forth and the cynic or the critic hung his diminished head. Nor would he readily overlook any flippant reference to sacred things. On the occasion, when a friend had

inconsiderately made a pun upon a text in the Gita, his rebuke was swift and crushing.

Prison, to him, with all its pain, hardship and humiliation, was no more than a place of refuge. Then he would remark "when God removes me from the work, it is because, it is better left in God's own hands to do." During the terrible days of the Indian struggle for rights, it often seemed that his only chance of peace and health was to be forcibly removed, by the strong hand of the law, from the scene of action. In those days too, when the struggle was eased of its intensity many a happy hour would be spent in the gathering together of a group of friends and associates and the singing of favourite hymns and stanzas from the the Bhagavat-Gita. Two of the hymns that made the strongest appeal to him, in which he never used to weary and in which all were invited to join, were the following:—

"Lead, Kindly Light, amid th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on.
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on."

And

"Take my hands and let them be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my feet and let them move
At the impulse of Thy Love.
Take my life and let it be
Ever, only, Lord, for Thee."

CHAPTER VIII

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Every man's progress is through a succession of teachers, each of whom seems, at the time, to have superlative influence, but it at last gives place to new. Each new mind we approach seems to require an abdication of all our past and present possessions. * * * * Take thankfully and heartily all they can give. Exhaust them, wrestle with them, let them not go until their blessing be won and after a short season, the dismay will be overpast, the excess of influence withdrawn and they will no longer be an alarming meteor but one more bright star shining serenely in your heaven and blending its light with all your day.

Emerson

INNUMERABLE are the influences that form the character and convictions of a person. The propelling force of the *Karman* of our past existence leads us through events and brings us into contact with men and women every one of whom and which contributes to our rise or fall. In the case of ordinary persons most of these influences are feeble and contradictory. Great men not only retain impressions, they turn them to account. Generally, with most spiritual men the awakening has come as a result of some domestic misfortune, some terrible disaster, which has given their

easy-going life a rude shock and brought forth all the latent powers of the soul. While, however, such afflictions have roused the powers of introspection, they have never failed to leave a trail of cynicism or sourness behind! In the case of Buddha, it was not personal suffering but vicarious sorrow that set him a-brooding and as a result, we find him the very picture of sweetness. With Gandhi the same thing has happened. The heart-rending disabilities of his countrymen in South Africa touched him to the quick and would give him no rest. The evil with which Buddha fought was social, while the one against which Gandhi had to entrench himself is essentially political. There are those who deplore the combination of the saint and the politician in him and very much wish that he had been a mere saint and no politician. They do not realize that the reasons that have made him a saint are exactly those that have drawn him into the vortex of politics. If they do, they will neither deplore nor feel surprised at the dual personality of our hero.

When we put down some definite result as proceeding from some definite cause, we must not be understood to mean that the personality of the man has no share therein. Unless there is the seeing eye, the thinking mind and the feeling heart, such a consummation is impossible. We become only that for which we have been previously prepared. The enormous misery of South Africa Indians could permanently and spiritually impress only an extremely delicate and tender heart. Their humiliations could rouse into persistent action only a lofty and proud spirit. Enthusiasm was required to start the struggle. An iron will was

necessary to carry it through. An exceptionally fine moral sense could alone prevent it from drifting into the muddy waters of violence and brute-force. And only a highly-developed spiritual nature could ensure not only the success of the movement but the moral regeneration of all those who took part therein.

Patriot-saint that he is, it is necessary to remember always that though patriotic activities brought out all his spiritual qualities and accelerated his spiritual growth, yet religion was his first love. After the dropping off of his boyish atheism, Gandhi came to love religion "as only a child could love its mother." Essentially of an æsthetic turn of mind, he was drawn towards religion because he had learnt to his cost, how vulgar irreligion was. The more he read the Gita, the more he came to realise the singular beauty and sublimity of the religions sentiment; and his artistic nature longed to assimilate and perpetuate the exalted moods awakened by the Lord's song.

Beyond this, his religion did not at first go. With the coming of thought, with the comparison of notes, with the contact with other minds and books, questions of philosophy, of rituals, of the innumerable contradictions and idiosyncrasies, that had accumulated like a crust on religion, began to challenge his attention and nowhere do we find the true *Bania* spirit of discriminating between essentials and non-essentials more in evidence than the decisive way in which Gandhi with practically one gesture brushed aside these problems. To him they had no fascination whatsoever. Neither the intellectual gymnastics of philosophy and metaphysics or the apparently dry drill of rituals and

ceremonials could decoy him ; nor did he dare enter the portals of ecstatic *Bhakti*, the overpowering flood of whose tide carries the devotee off his feet. In his case all was definite and exact.

While the dawn of religious life was slowly coming over him, it was Gandhi's good fortune to have come into intimate contact with the late Rajachandra Ravji-bhai Nehta or Kavi Rajachandra as he was popularly called. A *Bania* by caste and a Jain by religion, this extraordinary man without anything but the rudiments of vernacular instruction to guide him, attained within the brief span of thirty-two years' life, a most remarkable position. He first attracted public notice by his marvellous poetical powers and by his equally marvellous feats of memory. While Pandit Gattulalji was only an *Ashtavadhani*, Kavi Rajachandra could attend to one hundred different mental operations at a time and while yet in his teens earned the plaudits of (1887) Sir Charles Sargent, then Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, Dr. Peterson, Mr. Malbari and several others. So impressed was Sir Charles Sargent with his feats that he invited Kavi Rajachandra to accompany him to Europe. But orthodox Jain that he was, the Kavi refused to cross the seas. He also found some thing vulgar in merely being an "animal for show." He, therefore, discontinued practising his feats and simultaneously started two opposite careers, one material and the other spiritual. He amassed quite a fortune as a jeweller ; at the same time, he did not neglect his spiritual development ; and as his experiences deepened and his vision expanded, he began to revolve in his mind the gigantic ambition of heading a vast

religious revival. With that object in view, he had commenced preparing to renounce his belongings, but before he could do so, he suddenly fell ill and died (1901).

Though Gandhi's personal contact with Rajachandra hardly exceeded two years, still there was a very intimate exchange of thought between these two young men. The extraordinary lucidity of Rajachandra's intellect and his extensive learning profoundly impressed Gandhi. Though Rajachandra was deeply attached to the past, still his mind was essentially modern in its outlook; and in Gandhi's idealisation of the ancient Aryan civilisation, in his belief in the utility and efficacy of the pristine caste system and in his implicit belief in the law of *Karman*, we may see traces of Rajachandra's influence. More important than anything else was the deepening of the spiritual ideal of life. If in the distance and isolation of his early South African life (1893-1901) the quest of God-head was still his ambition, that was due mainly to his stimulating friendship with Rajachandra. Gandhi does not seem ever to have practised *Hatha-Yoga*, in which Rajachandra excelled. But the ideal of asceticism, in the midst of worldly possessions, was faithfully kept. Rajachandra kept his integrity and truthfulness even in the demoralizing atmosphere of trade and is said to have voluntarily cancelled a contract which would have brought him Rs. 25,000 at the expense of another. Gandhi too stuck firmly to truth in his own sphere and refused to accept legal cases involving fraud.

Nor was the influence of Rajachandra the only Jain influence that affected Gandhi. His parents used to resort to Jain *Sadhus*. The triple vow of abstaining

from wine, woman and flesh, was administered to Gandhi by a jain; and in a sense, the whole of Gujarat is dominated by Jains. There is perhaps no part of India where Hinduism and jainism live side by side with such perfect amity. It has surprised many to find that people, influenced by two such religions, Hinduism and jainism, should have abnormally developed mercantile instinct. But it is exactly the influence of jainism, which, while it has dwarfed the higher metaphysical and emotional moods of Gujarat, has enabled the children of the soil to develop practical instincts which, in other parts of the country, lie suppressed under the dead weight of metaphysics. Though Gandhi's instinct could never be reconciled with the frankly sceptical and agnostic outlook of the worshippers of Mahavir, he was enormously influenced by the message of work which Jainism along with Buddhism has given to India. In fact, he has a marvellous intellectual affinity to the jains. While Jainism cannot boast of daring flights into the super-conscious regions, its tireless capacity for details, its subtle and analytical genius, its supreme capacity of going straight to the heart of a subject, are truly admirable and it was this intellectual affinity towards the ethics and philosophy of Jains that must have been responsible for Gandhi's practice of the *Agamas*. Besides, Gandhi found that the two supreme qualities—he was drawn to most—formed the chief planks of Jainism; *viz.* Love-*Ahimsa*—and asceticism. Love was his nature. Asceticism, that arid thing which, unrelieved by Love, would make the most repulsive personality in the world, did not come to him till late. But in his heart it was already

established as a principle of life. It was the *Ahimsa* and the asceticism of the Jains that enabled them to hold their ground while the rebel Buddhist was driven out of the land. The philosophy and theology of the jains are partly borrowed from the ancient Brahmanic—especially *Saukhya* and *Yoga*—systems. The *Ratnatraya*—"three jewels"—*Samyak-jnana*, *Samyak darshana* and *Samyak-charitra*—sum up the religious aspirations and practices of the pious Jains. We do not know how far the first two influenced Gandhi. But he has taken up the third with all the energy of his soul and has devoted the whole of his life to the practising of the fivefold virtue inculcated therefor: (1) *Ahimsa*—non-killing, (2) *Satya*—truthfulness, (3) *Brahmacharya*—continence, (4) *Asteya*—"Non-thieving," (5) *Aparigraha*—not holding of property. For Love and Truthfulness, he required no guidance; and as experience began to deepen, he commenced the rigorous pursuit of the other three. It will be seen that these are exactly the *Yamas* of the *Young*, but we do not know whether Gandhi was first introduced to them through Jainism or through Hinduism. As he truly says, "without living according to these maxims, we are incapable even of having a reasonable perception of religion."

Then came Christianity. In his early London days Gandhi had come under the good influence of some pious Christians. In his early South African days he studied the Bible. The Sermon on the Mount became favourite. Such sentences as "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; Blessed are ye when men shall revile you for my sake, for great is your

reward in heaven ; Resist not evil ; Love your enemies , Bless them that curse you ; Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" went throbbing into his brain for days and days together and brought him singular peace and exaltation. But more than that, it was the personality of the Christ that had such a fascination for him. Neither Buddha, nor Mahomet nor any of the Saints he had read of, had died for the cause ; Jesus not only suffered for men but met crucifixion, while engaged in saving them. This drew him towards him. Of course he did not, could not, accept him as the Saviour ; but he has nothing but the highest veneration for the morality and personality of Jesus. The singular combination of modesty and authority in the Christ charmed him ; and what a love for humanity ! Though, with haughty disdain he would rebuke the Pharisees, he was always the friend of the distressed ! He would cure the sick of the palsy ; he loved to cleanse the lepers ; and it was this willing love for the sufferers and his readiness to die for them that evoked Gandhi's veneration for the founder of Christianity. To him (as to Vivekanand) Jesus Christ has been one of the perfect characters after whom one's own life is to be modelled.

This triple influence then—Vaishnavite Hinduism Liberal Jainism and veneration for the personality of Jesus Christ—steadily growing, was the foundation on which Gandhi's moral nature was built. Eight years' leadership of Indians in Natal steadied his character widened his outlook and gave a tone to his personality. Then as we have seen, he returned to India for settling here permanently. But the Providence, that presided over his destiny and was watching it with Divine

solicitude, knew that Gandhi was but half-developed and that he still lacked the splendours of heroism and saintliness; so Gandhi had to go back to the Transvaal and there during the first seven years of the Passive Resistance Struggle, his mind received that bent about which we shall have something to say else-where.

Of all the great sons of Europe in the 19th century Mazzini was one of the most remarkable. His burning love of independence, his readiness to sacrifice himself for the cause, his lofty idealism, his genuine humanitarianism, his mellow piety, his utter sincerity and childlike innocence,—all these qualities were calculated to appeal to a youth of Gandhi's enthusiasm. It is, however, remarkable that Gandhi's life discovers no more trace of Mazzini's influence than that of Swami Vivekanand or Ramatirtha. This shows that Gandhi was not an impressionable copyist but a very thorough and careful reader, not to be swayed by any or every opinion. While he would rush headlong in following a gospel that appealed to him, he was as immoveable as a rock when some uncongenial message was brought to him. That is why Mazzini's great example and precept never led him to even intellectually accept the cult of violence.

The same trait is revealed in his study of Thoreau and Emerson. In the firmament of modern European and American Literature, Emerson shines with dazzling lustre. "All through his life, he navigated the Transcendental sea, piloted by a clear moral sense, warned off the rocks by the saving grace of humour and kept from capsizing by the good ballast of New England prudence." The penetrating genius of Emerson has

discovered many a "spiritual truth"; and what is more he not only preached truth but lived it. But Gandhi has passed by him with a reverend salute to pay his heart-felt homage to the comparatively humbler personality of Thoreau; and the reason is not far to seek. Emerson, in spite of his transcendental genius, has not any dynamic message to mankind. Drinking deep of the spiritual river, he is slothful enough and neglects to run after countless millions of thirsty humanity. If any kindred spirit happened to be nigh, he would beckon it with a sympathetic gesture. But he would do nothing more. Such a static character, such a "property-holding, law-abiding well-dressed"-philosopher, had no charm for Gandhi; The rugged saturnine naturalist of *walden* wood, on the other hand, had an appealing point in him. He was a rebel through and through; Emerson too, in a sense, was a rebel, but only in his studies. There he talked with the majesty of Solon and the splendour of Plato. Thoreau, when he came into contact with society, proved his mettle by loftily despising its conventions. He had carried his worship of conscience to the limit of seeking imprisonment for refusal to pay a trifling tax. He had perfected the theory of "Civil Disobedience." He had hit the golden mean between the inglorious acquiescence of a docile citizen and the philosophical anarchism of Tolstoy. "That government is best which governs the least. I ask for, not at once no government but *at once* a better government; we should be men first and subjects afterwards. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine (of injustice),

Prisons are the only house in a slave-state in which a free man can abide with honour. When I meet a government which says to me "Your money or your life," I am in no haste to give it my money. I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest." These and other sentiments of Thoreau profoundly influenced Gandhi's political thought and outlook; and in the Apostle of Non-violent Non-Co-operation we can trace the influence of Thoreau.

In John Ruskin Gandhi recognised a kindred spirit. Ruskin was, as Gandhi is, a unique combination of the Realist, the Idealist and the Moralist. Ruskin came to consider the social questions of his day first from the standpoint of Art. A passionate lover of Nature and of beauty in landscape, Ruskin could not reconcile himself to the Industrial Revolution, born of the introduction of steam-power and of complex machinery. Gandhi's condemnation of the present-day industrialism is based mainly on the moral degeneration which it brings about. Gandhi takes up the question where Ruskin leaves it. He approaches it from a wider horizon. His conclusions, therefore, are more thorough going than of Ruskin. Ruskin showed his weakness by innumerable contradictions which his opponents compelled him to acknowledge. He lacked the ruthless logical spirit of Gandhi. He shrinks from inevitable conclusions of his own arguments. He condemned railways in one breath and in another contradicted himself. The truth is that he lacked the magnificent personality of Gandhi. None but an exceptionally powerful personality can dare go to the last and most

perplexing inductions of thorough-going logic. Ruskin with all his moral and intellectual intrepidity, had to keep an eye on the middle-class English society, whom he could not altogether defy. None who has not sounded the depths of Politics on the one hand and Religion on the other, can handle social problems with certitude and success. Ruskin was indifferent to Politics and was unsuccessful in his religious quest. His views, therefore, reveal an incompleteness which is very disappointing. His arguments move in a circle. With respect to Gandhi, there is nothing simpler, more convincing (though paradoxical) than his views on machinery, industrialism and civilization in general. One might agree with them or not but there they are complete thorough-going and challenging opposition.

But of all the men who influenced him, Count Leo Tolstoy stands at the top. Gandhi's disgust of city-life, his general hatred of the modern civilisation, his distrust of and opposition to all systems of Government, his love of simplicity, his sympathy with the poor and their sufferings, his contempt of all outer form, his self-analysis, his daring logic, his utter truthfulness, his loathing of luxury, his insistence on Brahmacharya, his dislike of institutions, his conception of the dignity of (manual) labour, his conception of brotherhood, his horror of violence, his quest of God, his disbelief in miracles, his "real solid serious view of life,"—all remind us of Tolstoy. Tolstoy was a man "to whom truth is a sphere and life a complete round," so is it to Gandhi. Like Tolstoy, he too "stands erect and scornful among the worshippers of modern world." He too wants "the triumph of the soul over civilisation's

routine and dogma." Gandhi ^{owes} much to Tolstoy, but it would be a mistake to suppose that he has blindly imbibed his views and eccentricities. Critics have said that the Count's radical views on Government were pardonable because he lived under one which daily outraged his heart and conscience.' Tolstoy's horror of war dated from his actual experience at Sebastopol. Tolstoy's hatred of city-life was due to his intense love of nature and to his passion for country-home of Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy's disgust for the pleasures of the wealthy can also be understood because he had sounded their hollowness by personal experience. Gandhi has never been a copyist and the development of his views on the lines of those of Tolstoy rested on the same foundations of Truth and Love on which Tolstoy built his; that in the pursuit of these two ideals, he was considerably helped by the experiences and opinion of the Grand Mujik was a different matter. Once Love is insisted upon, not only as an individual or social quality but one which must stand at the root of the body-politics, Government ought to be a thing of the past if Government is synonymous with violence, actual or prospective, physical or mental wars also lose their rosy appearance and become nothing more than "organised murders," law, justice, Police as nothing but perpetuation of instruments of the current evil. That very doctrine of love which strikes against Government, equally works against the enemies of all Governments—the Terrorists; and the only way to resist tyranny of all kinds is aggressive suffering. To tamely submit to misery and oppression goes against the fundamental conceptions of Truth,

to inflict sufferings on the wrong-doer with the object of escaping from the misery goes against the Law of Love and so the Law of Aggressive Suffering is the one course open.

Here Gandhi's practical life enabled him to considerably improve upon the somewhat crude views of the Russian philosopher. Harrowing reports of the conditions of political prisoners in Siberia wrung the heart of Tolstoy with bitter anguish but he would under no circumstances justify violent resistance of evil. What then was the way? The Count's reply was "persuasion, argument and protest." In another mood, he does indeed suggest the refusal to render military service with a readiness to go to jails if necessary but his conflicting views suffer in comparison with the Satyagraha methods and principles almost perfected by Gandhi.

Though unconsciously a propagandist in his own academic way, Tolstoy inveighed against propaganda and said, "propaganda is the temptation of the devil. Thy first duty is to live rightly!" While heartily agreeing with the duty of living rightly Gandhi has his own views on propaganda; in fact he has found out that far from being the temptation of the devil, propaganda, if rightly conducted, is the instrument of angels for self-elevation.

Hating propaganda, even ashamed of his literary work, Tolstoy found occasions when he could usefully spend his time only by preparing his own shoes. While as proving the dignity of *any* human labour, this is all right, the dread with which Tolstoy touched duties, which separated him too much from the

average man, is almost ludicrous. Herein Gandhi has shown his practical insight and while he has never hesitated from performing the humblest duties, he has at long stretches performed the higher ones without any visible distrust or mental uneasiness.

But even after the last analysis of his views and their last comparison with the theories and dogmas of other thinkers—Eastern and Western, we find ourselves practically where we were in the beginning. The question still remains “by what mysterious force could Gandhi unerringly come to rely upon the visions and experiences of half a dozen premier minds in this babel of conflicting voices”? Whence the firm grasp of a handful of truths? Whence the intrepidity to accompany them to the logical end? Whence this serious, earnest almost holy view of life when all the objects of senses were beckoning him with a tempting gesture? How do you account for so much asceticism in the midst of opportunities for luxury? Or whence the unquenchable thirst for moral perfection and the unwearied pursuit of God-head? It is not Tolstoy, nor Ruskin, nor Thoreau, nor yet any man or book that *has made* Gandhi. The seeds were already there. They were only watered into growth. The treasure, all unknown to him, was lying deep embedded in his heart; and Ruskin and Tolstoy and Thoreau may be likened to “travelling geologists whose business it is to give expert advice. But the fatiguing work and digging and mining has been Gandhi’s in its entirety. We thank these geologists and give them a little bonus. They are entitled to it. But they can have no share in the royalty.

CHAPTER IX

BACK HOME

Among us, as I write, is dwelling for brief space, one whose presence is a benediction, and whose feet sanctify every house in which he enters,—Gandhi, our Martyr and Saint. He, too by strange ways was led into circumstances in which alone could flower all that he brought with him of patient, unwearying courage that naught might daunt, unselfishness that found its joy in sacrifice, endurance so sweetly gentle that its power was not readily understood. As I stood for a moment facing him, hand clasped in hand, I saw in him that deathless spirit which redeems by suffering, and in death wins life for others one of those marked out for the high service of becoming Saviours and helpers of humanity.

Annie Besant (1917)

WHEN Gandhi returned to India, in the second week of January 1915, the country was slowly recovering from the devastating effects of the long-continued policy of repression, started by the Bureaucracy in reply to the anti-Partition agitation. As usually happens in such cases, the policy of repression outlived the agitation and the partition which heralded that agitation. Even when the Boycott movement was abandoned and the grievance of Partition redressed to the satisfaction of Bengali sentiment, the Press Act, the

Seditious Meetings' Act and other deadly weapons were still being brandished by the Bureaucracy in a way challenging the people and their leaders to raise their heads once more if they dared. The enthusiasm of the country was at its lowest ebb. Self-confidence, organisation, courage had all disappeared. The Terrorists were being vigorously hunted; and the vigour of their hunt led to the harassments of many others. The Komagata Maru episode had its own tale to tell. Several patriotic Indians were still in gaols or in self-imposed exile. The desolation of the families of several politically-minded and hence persecuted men deterred proved a total failure. The Congress had gone down in estimation and popularity. A hush had fallen over the country; and people did not know whom to look up to for leadership and guidance.

The release of Lokamanya Tilak and the entry of Mr. Beasant into the field of Indian politics were however very encouraging signs and what even the combined influence of these two leaders could not have done, was effected by the Great War, which came to India as a blessing in disguise. It was the War which enabled Indians to demonstrate their loyalty even to the satisfaction of their taxing masters and to get some respite from the dogs of repression, and reorganize their own scattered resources to suit the changed requirements of the country.

It was at this juncture that Gandhi started his Indian career and his uniform good fortune attended him here also in that he could begin his work under exceptionally favourable circumstances. The Moderates joyfully acclaimed the political disciple of Gokhale,

The Extremists enthusiastically welcomed the apostle of the gospel of Satyagraha ; and even the Bureaucracy thought it prudent to mark their appreciation of the leader of the South African British Indians by conferring (1915) upon him the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal. How fortunate Gandhi was in getting unique welcome from all the contending parties can be understood by contrasting his return Home with that (June 1914) of Lokamanya Tilak. While the Government seemed over-anxious to honour Gandhi, it seemed determined to crush Tilak. Gandhi was the darling of the Moderates ; Tilak was the dread of these opponents. Gandhi began his Indian career on a bed of roses ; Tilak had to do it amid prejudices and persecutions.

In one respect, indeed, this chorus of welcome and goodwill was a disadvantage and even a handicap to Gandhi. It was impossible for him to take a single step without hurting the susceptibilities of one section of the populace or other. Did Gandhi join the then sectional congress ? The outcasted Extremists felt that the lion of South Africa was gradually becoming domesticated. Did he keep an untouchable family in his household ? Gujarat, the homeland unmistakably threatened him with neglect or persecution. His very asceticism and austerity fairly frightened the Moderate, the frank upholder of the Western civilisation ; and when he repeatedly asked his countrymen not to make any mental reservations but to preach sedition if they thought sedition, the Bureaucrats must surely have felt uneasy.

Every return of Gandhi from abroad has been either preceded or followed by the death of somebody dearest to him. A few months before he came (1892)

home from London, he had lost his mother. In 1901, he had the misfortune of losing his friend and spiritual guide Kavi Rajchandra and in 1915 soon after Gandhi's return to India, died his political Guru, the Hon. Mr. G. K. Ghokhaie. It was Gokhale's wish that Gandhi should succeed him in the Presidentship of the Servants of India Society. Gokhale's disciples, however, seem to have known better; for, when in pursuance of his declared intention to Gokhale, he actually applied for permission to be admitted to the society, his application was rejected by an overwhelming majority; and in fairness to the members of the Society, it must be admitted that their decision was essentially sound. Excepting loyalty to Gokhale, there was hardly any point on which they could have agreed with Gandhi. Gandhi's views on Social Reform, on Religion, on Western Civilisation were radically different from theirs. In politics, as Gandhi himself has stated on one occasion, he differed as fundamentally from the so-called Moderates as from the so-called Extremists; and this ill-assorted marriage would have proved a frequent source of trouble, and a speedy application for divorce would have been the result.

Gokhale foresaw nothing of these consequences. He was no doubt, aware of Gandhi's views but he felt that they were the effect of his idealisation of certain aspects of Hindu culture and civilisation and no sooner was Gandhi brought into contact with the hard realities of Indian life, than he would shed many of them at once. This optimism does great credit to Gokhale's heart but scarcely any to his head. He advised Gandhi to travel all over India and keep his eye open and mouth shut for full twelve months.

Even without the benefit of this injunction, Gandhi could not have acted otherwise. It is a fact that generally the boldest man is the most cautious; and Gandhi would not have taken a decisive part in the national movements without sounding at every important point, the depths of Indian political waters. Besides, he had not the ordinary politicians eagerness to be in lime-light. Nothing shows his "unpolitical" nature more than the fact that when at a bound he could have occupied one of the half-a-dozen foremost places in the public of the country, he deliberately allowed the opportunity to slip away. He would study Indian life, Indian problems. Indian condition "Indian India" before he would take his rightful place in the national movements.

His more than one year's tour was a triumphal march. Everywhere he was "lionized," and was the recipient of friendly welcome and public address. As a traveller, Gandhi is unique. To a large heart, he joins an observant eye. His capacity for details, his ability to take a wide view, his sympathy, his imagination, his cold merciless logic were of infinite use to him in gauging the situation. The first thing that pained him most in his travellings was that young men who were the "hopes of India did not know how to love the motherland." Zeal there was, enough and to spare; but it was misdirected zeal. What was wanting was a proper and perfect cultivation of the quality of *Ahimsa* in its active forms. "If our rulers but feel" said Gandhi "that no matter what we might feel about their acts, we would hold their bodies as sacred as our own, there would

immediately spring up an atmosphere of mutual trust to pave the way for an honourable and just solution" of the Indian problem. It was this woeful want of love that was responsible for the deep distrust which he found to exist between the Government and the people, The Hindus and the Moslems, the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins. This distrust naturally resulted in an atmosphere of hypocrisy. Nobody dared or cared to speak the truth. There was fear of Government, fear of priests, fear of caste-unions. India seemed to him a fear-ridden land. "None who fears God," Gandhi pointed out, "need fear man." and to remove this demon of fear, public life must he thought be spiritualized; "public life must be the echo of private life; there should be no divorce between the two." India's salvation lay in a thorough-going Swadeshi spirit. But wherever he turned, he found it wanting. "If you kill the vernaculars and raise the English language on their tombs then you are not favouring Swadeshi in the right sense of the term," His strictures on dress are no less severe than his strictures on the use of the English language, "We commit a Breach of the Swadeshi spirit certainly if we wear foreign-made cloth; but we do so also if we adopt the foreign cut." He called for Swadeshism in religion, swadeshism in politics, swadeshism in economics. Swadeshism in economics led him to inquire into the condition of India's spinning and weaving industry and he determined to revive it. Swadeshism in religion opened to him the difficult and delicate problem of untouchability. "Is untouchability a part of Hinduism?" he asked. "I do not know;" he added "I have now to learn

what Hinduism really is. In so far as I have been able to study Hinduism outside India, I have felt that it is no part of real Hinduism to have in its fold "untouchables." If it were proved to me that this is an essential part of Hinduism, I for one would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself." whatever the question he studied, the conviction was gradually forced upon him that the only thing that could save the country was Satyagraha the weapon of the fearless.

Before however, he could take up that weapon it was necessary for him to settle somewhere and form his own centre of work. But for the refusal of the Servants of India Society, he would have settled at Poona. Great pressure was being brought to bear upon him to start his centre of work in Bengal. Several other Provinces of India were also anxious to claim him as their chief; but ultimately, after mature deliberation, Gandhi decided to establish himself in his homeland (Gujarat). The choice was both natural and appropriate.

The lack of the traditions of public and especially political life in Gujarat was, in a sense a great advantage. The transfer of leadership from one great man to another is always accompanied and followed by endless recriminations. In Maharashtra for instance the enthronement of Tilak in the seat of Ranade created no little heart-burning. In this respect Gandhi's good fortune stood him in great stead. There was no leader whom he had to supplant or replace. The throne of political leadership of Gujarat was vacant. He had simply to occupy it. The work of the awakening and organising Gujarat has been almost entirely his. Though he had very little share in drafting the

Congress-League scheme, still he greatly popularized it in Gujarat by securing for it thousands of signatures and the same was presented in the form of a petition to Mr. Montague on the occasion of his visit to India. Gujarat under his inspiration—thanks to the spirit of provincial redistribution which was already abroad—began to regard herself as a distinct entity. with unity of language, culture and traditions, and was eager to make her own contribution to the political life of the country.

Gandhi's presidential address (Nov, 1917) at the first Gujarat Political Conference forms a curious contrast to that of Mrs. Besant at the Calcutta (Dec. 1917) session of the Indian National Congress. Mrs. Besant's powerful and eloquent address was completely political; Gandhi's was more introspective and dwelt principally on Indian's poverty, plague, malaria, problems of untouchability and cow-protection, drink evil, milk-supply, Swadeshi, railway travelling etc. In opening his address Gandhi dwelt on the necessity of *Swaraj* and in dilating upon the theme he declared his own ideal for India:

"I cannot forget that India is not Europe, India is not Japan. India is not China. We are children of the ancient nation. Our civilisation abides even as the ocean, in spite of its ebbs and flows. We have the mountains that kiss the sky; we have the matchless beauties of nature and we have handed down to us a heritage of the deeds of valour. The Divine word that 'India alone is the land of *Karma* and the rest is the land of *Bhoga*' is indelibly printed on my mind. I feel that India's mission is different from that of the others. India is fitted for the religious supremacy of the world."

Gandhi's attitude during the Great European War was such as could be expected from his previous career.

His South African experiences, embittered though they would have any other leader, left him still a firm believer in the Spiritual Mission of the British Empire and he considered it as absolutely unchivalrous to carry on an intensive political agitation in the country at a time when Britain was engaged in a mortal struggle with Germany and her allies. In his memorable letter to the Viceroy (April 29th, 1918) he says :—

“ I recognize that in the hour of its danger we must give ungrudging and unequivocal support to their Empire. If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions and not whisper ‘Home Rule’ during the Pendency of the War. I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire; and I know that India by this very act would become the most favoured partner in the Empire. But practically the whole of educated India has decided to take a less effective course.”

This letter was written at the time of the Delhi War Conference which Gandhi refused at first to attend owing to the deliberate failure on the part of the Government to invite the co-operation of Lokamanya Tilak and Mrs. Besant. Consistently with his attitude of regard for the difficulties of Britain, he “purposely refrained from stating (his) views either at Committee or at the Conference itself.” He felt that he “could best serve the objects of the Conference by simply tendering (his) support to the resolutions submitted to

it," and this he did "without any reservation." He followed the same course of conduct at the Bombay War Conference. He neither supported the Hon. Mr. Khaparde's resolution at Delhi nor joined in Mr. Jinnah's timely protest against the opening speech of Lord Willingdon at the Bombay Conference. At a public meeting, however, he made a powerful speech emphatically protesting against Lord Willingdon's gratuitous insult to the Home Rulers; but even then he did not fail to impress upon his countrymen the necessity of helping Britain in her hour of peril;—

"I doubt not that if we but do our duty to the fullest extent we would place India's loyalty above suspicion. For with a true Home ruler, it must be an article of faith that the Empire must be saved; for in its safety lies the fruition of his fondest hopes. Not to help the Empire is to commit national suicide. How can we wish harm to our would be partner without hurting ourselves?.....I wish I could still persuade the country to accept my view that absolutely unconditional and whole-hearted co-operation with the Government on the part of educated India will bring us within sight of our goal as nothing else will."

The utter magnanimity of this attitude will be universally accepted. But constituted as human nature is, it was impossible, in the face of palpable Government distrust, for the people's leaders to make any appreciable headway in enrolling recruits for the war. When the Government of India called for 6,000 Indian Volunteers, Lokamanya Tilak threw himself into the work with his accustomed ardour, but he quickly found out that educated India's help in the

direction was not really wanted and so he gave up the thankless task. Mr. Tilak could appreciate the plea of "no bargaining." But when India began to get kicks and insulting sermons in the bargain, he was not the man to persist in his offer of help. Gandhi's mind is differently constituted. What the Government did or did not do to encourage recruits was, according to him not his look-out. He would continue his campaign until the Government actually refused to accept his recruits. He therefore issued his famous appeal to the people of Kaira in particular and of Gujarat in general. Writing (June 23rd 1918) from Nadiad he said :—

"If we want to learn the use of arms with the greatest possible despatch, it is our duty to enlist ourselves in the army.

"There can be no friendship between the brave and the effeminate. We are regarded as a cowardly people. If we want to become free from that reproach, we should learn the use of arms.

"The easiest and straightest way therefore to win Swaraj is to participate in the defence of the empire. If the Empire perishes, with it perish our cherished aspirations,

"Some say that if we do not secure (political) rights just now, we would be cheated afterwards. The power acquired in defending the Empire will be the power that can secure those rights."

He called upon the people to flock to his banner not in scores, not in hundreds but in thousands. But, as was quite natural, the response was most disappointing. Wherever he went, he was plainly though

respectfully told that there could be no question of recruiting when the Government was bent on a policy of repression.

People have expressed their surprise that the apostle *Ahimsa* should lead a campaign of recruiting. "Is not" they ask "the call for recruits fundamentally inconsistent with the Gospel of Non-violence?" Inconsistent in a sense, it is. But the inconsistency is not only pardonable but positively laudable in that it proves that Gandhi had already begun to think of spiritual truths not merely from the individual stand-point but also in reference to the present requirements of society. A saint developed into a social legislator may on occasions have to incur censure and criticism for inconsistency but will on that very account be able to help society far better. Nothing humiliated Gandhi more during the eventful years of the war than the bitter thought that India was as mere chattel to England and that in the event of any possible reverses to English arms, thirty crores of Indians would have quietly to pass under another foreign yoke. "If the worst happens to India—which may God forbid—and she passes into the hands of some other nation, India's piteous cry will make England hang her head in shame before the world and curses will descend upon her for having emasculated a nation of thirty crores." It was probably this painful and humiliating thought that prompted Gandhi seemingly against his doctrine of non-violence, to impress upon his countrymen the urgent need of military training. But in this attitude, real inconsistency there is none as the *Ahimsa* Gandhi wants India to imbibe is not the *Ahimsa* of a

coward but that of a hero, of a man who knows how to kill but would prefer not to do so.

From the commencement of his Indian career to the termination of the Great War, the sum-total of Gandhi's contribution to the public life was easily less than that of any other leader; and yet inspite of his comparative silence and inactivity Gandhi exerted a wonderful influence. Everywhere his services were in requisition; everywhere his presence was welcomed and honoured. Like a whale, he was majestically sailing across the endless seas of Indian politics, untroubled and undistracted by the tempestuous waves beating around him.

CHAPTER X

FEELING HIS WAY

If I could popularize the use of soul-force which is but another name for love-force in place of brute-force, I know I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst. In season and out of season, therefore, I shall discipline myself to present for acceptance to those that care and if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law.

M. K. Gandhi (1918)

THE instinct that governs the actions of the majority of men and women is to live at any cost. With them the preservation of life is the most important thing; the means do not count for much. Then there is the class of those persons who want to live with honour and die with honour. That is the way of respectable people. There is, however, a still smaller class of persons who want to live heroically and die heroically. These are the heroes and martyrs. Gandhi belongs to this class. The ordinary ways of ordinary politicians have no charm of him. Intellectual gymnastics do not allure him. But to take up an evil for redress to wrestle with the inhumanity on which it is enthroned, draws out all the latent powers of his heroic heart. Then Gandhi is at his best.

During the first four years of his Indian career, Gandhi, as we have seen, was comparatively quiet. He showed his sympathy for Britain not only by leading a recruiting campaign in 1917, but also by his persistent refusal to be drawn into the agitation for Home Rule. But though he wanted to deal chivalrously with Great Britain, he had absolutely no mind to give a blank cheque to the Indian Bureaucracy and thus indirectly help them in their campaign of repression. It is said that he even wanted to inaugurate a campaign of Civil Disobedience at the time of the internment of Mrs. Besant to get her and the Ali brothers released; for his utter faith in the purity of *Satyagraha* enables him to use the weapon "in season and out of season;" and the pre-occupations of Britain in the World War was absolutely no excuse for not using a remedy which at once blesses those that use it and those against whom it is directed.

To discipline and train persons is the spirit of *Satyagraha*, Gandhi started (1916) the *Satyagrahashram*, an institute which is now known throughout the length and breadth of the Indian Continent. The idea of training up missionaries for national up-lift is itself not new; there are some (though extremely few) Indian institutions started with this object; and evidently Gandhi has taken his cue from the well-known institution started at Poona by his master, the Hon. Mr. Gokhale. But the training which Gokhale sought to give was pronouncedly intellectual. Economics, statistics, details of the administrative machinery—these and like subjects he had mastered and he wanted his disciples to master. There was no conscious or deliberate instruction in de-

veloping the spiritual powers of his disciples, With Gandhi the case is quite different. Intellectual details from merely the dimmest back-ground of his teaching. "Let me have men," says he. "Where are men?" "If men are not found out, they must be *made*." The cynic might sneeringly say that such men are born, not made. Gandhi demurs. Others might say that the active participation in the movements of the day can alone give tone and strength to character and personality. Gandhi only partially agrees with this view. Over and above the inevitable training of experience, he wants "home lessons" to be given in character and heroism. Though generally "times of herisom are the times of terror," it is a mistake to suppose that heroic traits cannot be developed in the performance of everyday duties. "The day never shines in which this element may not work. To speak the truth, even with some austerity, to live with some rigour of tempeance the unremitting retention of simple and high sentiments in obscure duties, is hardening the character to that temper which will work with honour, if need be. in the tumult or on the scaffold."

The *Satyagrahashram* is situated by the side of the river *Sabarmati* on an extensive plot of ground measuring about twenty acres. The site, together with all the buildidgs, has cost about three lakhs of rupees, half of which has been contributed by Dr. P. J. and the rest by a dozen wealthy persons at Ahmedabad and Bombay. The aim of the *Ashram* is to teach how to serve the Mother-land (and to serve her). According to Gandhi, the service of the Mother-land is not a game for self-aggrandizement. The work can be done

only by those who have built up their character. So the chief activities of the inmates of the *Ashram* are devoted to the development of all the powers of the soul. How is this to be done? By imbibing the spirit of religion. The spirit of religion is the same in all countries. The rules of life laid down as "self-demonstrated truth" are identical. The ten commandments of the Christians, the eight paths of the Buddhists, three jewels of the jains and the five Yamas of the Hindus are substantially all alike and Gandhi believes that the five Yams—Truthfulness, Non-killind (Love), Continence, Non-taieving, Non-possession (*Satya*, *Ahimsa*, *Brahmacharya*, *Asteya* and *Aparigraha*) can revolutionize the whole character. Truth and Love form the basis—the bed-rock—of the 'Gandhi cult'. The first reveals to the mind's eye all the inequities of the world and the second places in our hands the only religious weapon for their redress. The fighter for the country's liberty must have wrestled with his own mind. Only a man who has conquered himself can conquer others. The key to self-conquest lies in *Brahmacharya*. A servant of India may not indulge in passion, but must transmute the sexual energy into the ethereal energy—*Ojas* for the benefit of the country. "Many people have told me" says Gandhi in his *Guide to Health*, "(and I also believe it) that I am full of energy and enthusiasm; if even after twenty years of sensual enjoyment, I am still so, how much better should I have been if only I had lived a life of *Brahmacharya* all through!" To control the passion, one must control the palate. Simplicity in food will be followed and accompanied by simplicity in habits

and the simplicity of habits must be carried almost up to the point of renunciation. *Asteya* really means the non-possession of more property than is absolutely required for present use and Gandhi believes that "if only everybody takes enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world."

It will thus be seen that the five little *Yamas*, when properly practised, take us up to the limits of saintliness on the one hand and spiritual Socialism on the other. This is of course the ideal, sought to be attained by hard work and thought every day. To accelerate its pace Gandhi enforces clock-like regularity in the performance of the daily duties from four in the morning till bed-time. Then there is spinning and weaving which Gandhi has raised to the height of religion; the vow of *Samatva* enjoins upon the inmates of the *Ashram* the duty not only of eradicating the sin of "*untouchability*" but also of dispensing with servants altogether. Not only are the menial works to be done without the aid of menials but according to the ideal even the services of the scavenger are not to be called into requisition. To such logical and seemingly impracticable ends does Gandhi want to carry the truths he has come to believe in.

Critics have called this "a soul-less soul-force" and have opined that the "severity of the discipline" is likely to reduce men to the dullness of mechanism. In this age of loose and irregular living, such a discipline as is detailed above is likely to startle even those who are not required to undergo it. But it is not a very large price for the greatness in view; and though there may be room enough for a little more intellectual food,

still the main outlines chalked out by Gandhi appear to be inevitable and indispensable.

Institutions take time to grow and show substantial results and the *Satyagrahashram* is no exception to this rule. Even in the early life of the *Ashram*, while, trying to instil his spirit into the inmates, Gandhi did not remain indifferent to the wider work that was claiming attention. His all-India work served as a kind of model lessons for the *Satyagrahis* under training in the *Ashram*. During the years of the Great War, Gandhi demonstrated his *Satyagraha* spirit on three important occasions; (1) the Champaran inquiry (April 1917) (2) The Ahmedabad Mill Strike (March 1918) (3) and the Kaira struggle (Jan. to June 1918). His experiences on these occasions considerably helped him at the time of the *Satyagraha* agitation against the Rowlatt Act.

It was at the Lucknow Congress (1916) that in obedience to repeated requests of local leaders, Gandhi decided to tackle the delicate problem of the labour conditions in the district of Champaran. But before he could suggest the remedy, it was necessary for him to study the problem, hold an inquiry and collect information. On this modest mission he started for Champaran early in 1917, reached Muzaffarpur on the 15th and immediately proceeded thence to Motihari. Gandhi's attempt to beard the lion in his own den was too much for the indigo-planters; and the instinctive sympathy that must naturally exist between the English planters and the English officials brought Gandhi a notice from the Commissioner of the Division peremptorily asking him to quit the district "by the next available train." The usual reason of danger to

public peace and the possibility of serious disturbances was assigned. But the Commissioner had caught a Tartar, "Out of a sense of public responsibility," Gandhi declared that he was "unable to leave the district" and expressed his willingness "if it so pleases the authorities" to "submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience." Before the trying magistrate he made (18th March 1917) a statement wherein he showed that he had disregarded the order served upon him, "not for want of respect for lawful authority but in obedience to the higher law of our being—the voice of conscience." Now that Gandhi was in Champaran, the Government felt that, not his presence but his forcible removal from the field of his activities might lead to disturbances. They, therefore, not only wisely withdrew the notice but appointed a Commission of Inquiry and Gandhi's name was included in the list of the Commissioners. The nature of the tenants' grievances, of the Commission's report and the Government attitude may be seen from the speeches of the Hon. Mr. Maude, who introduced (Dec. 1916), in the Behar Legislative Council the Champaran Agrarian Bill. The Hon. Mr. Maude said :—

"It is said that there is in reality nothing wrong or rotten in the state of affairs, that every one concerned is perfectly happy, so long as they are left alone and that it is only when outside influences and agitators come in that any trouble is experienced. I submit that this contention is altogether untenable in the light of history of the past fifty years. What is it that we find on each individual occasion when fresh attention has been, at remarkably short intervals, drawn once more to the

conditions of the production of the indigo-plant? We find on every occasion that it is the system itself (and not some fresh little matter) which must be condemned as being inherently wrong and impossible. We see the utter futility of bringing the matter to any lasting or satisfactory settlement by the only solutions that have been so far attempted viz an enhancement of the price paid for indigo and a reduction of the tenants' burden by reducing the limit of the proportion of his land which would be required to ear-mark for indigo cultivation. History for fifty years and more has been building up a case for drastic action by Government and the findings of the recent Committee have merely set the key-stone on the case for interference.

"Now the root of the evil is the *tinkathia* system under which the *ryot* is bound to cultivate in indigo a proportion of his land. It is this obligation which Clause III of the Bill is intended to abolish once and for all in the Champaran District. The abolition and prohibition of the contracts referred to in this clause of the Bill is not confined to indigo but the case of any other kind of crop also.

"Clause IV (1) (a) of the Bill lays down that where an enhancement of rent has been taken in lieu of the obligation to grow a particular crop, the enhancement i. e. the additional rent added by the enhancement, shall be reduced by a certain specified proportion viz 20 per cent. In the case of the Turkantia concern and 26 per cent, in the case of other concerns. The members of the Committee unanimously considered that the enhancements which had been taken by five concerns, which alone took *Sharahbeshi* were excessive

representing as they did anything from 50 to 75 per cent, on the previously existing rental."

The Bill was bitterly opposed by the representatives of the Planters. The Hon. Mr. Kennedy said "I think it is my duty as a European, to tell you that the Government has forgotten that its real business is to govern; and that there is a general belief that the Government will give in to any agitation, provided that it is loud and noisy enough, however fictitious it may be." He compared Gandhi to Prospero, to the former's disadvantage. "Prospero was not only able to raise a storm but to quell it. I am afraid Mr. Gandhi is no Prospero. Like so many others he will be willingly listened to so long as he is able to preach his crusade against the Planter community, but when he attempts to get the ryot to pay rents, I am afraid there will be very few who would listen to him." But the Government refused to lend their ears to these gloomy fore-bodings and the passing of the Agrarian Bill (4th March 1918) completely justified the efforts of Gandhi in the cause.

If Gandhi went out of his way to inquire into the grievances of the poverty-stricken people in Champaran, he could not, of course, neglect the nearly 50,000 mill-hands of his own city. In fact, ever since his return home (1915) to almost the eve of his arrest and imprisonment, the interests of the Ahmedabad mill-hands have been watched by him with parental solicitude. He might be touring in the most distant parts of India but at the first intimation of labour troubles at Ahmedabad, he has cancelled other engagements and run up to their service; it is not, therefore, surprising that the mill-hands love him with an affection and reverence bor-

dering on the Divine. In all his work for the Ahmedabad mill-hands, he has been helped by Mrs. Anasuyabai, sister of Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, the leading millionaire of Ahmedabad. In the dispute we are presently going to narrate, sister and brother were pitted against each other, the sister espousing the cause of the poor mill-hands and the brother championing the side of his brother mill-owners. During the latter half of 1917, Ahmedabad was visited by plague of a rather virulent type and just by way of inducements to stay and work, the mill-owners had been giving for some months to their weavers, numbering about 10,000, a daily bonus of twelve annas to a rupee over and above their daily wages of which the monthly average was about rupees twenty-three. The plague over, the bonus was attempted to be withdrawn, though in the meanwhile prices had gone up by leaps and bounds. Wheat had risen 80 p. c., bajra 100 p. c., fuel 60 p. c., cloth 50 p. c., oil 100 p. c. In consideration for so heavy an increase, the mill-owners offered the ridiculously small addition of 20 p. c. pointing out that at Bombay the weaver's monthly average did not exceed Rs. 28. But one wrong does not justify another and the matter was referred to arbitration, Gandhi Mr. Banker and Mr. V. J. Patel acting as the representatives of the weavers, and Mr. Ambalal together with Shet Jagabhai and Shet Chandulal Chinulal representing the mill-owners. The popular Collector, Mr. Chatfield, was selected as Umpire. Before the Committee could commence work, the unwilling mill-owners, taking advantage of a slight pretext, declared (22 Feb. 1918) a general lock-out in which they persisted till the 11th of March. Then they opened the mills; now it

was the turn of the weavers to strike work. They wanted 50 p.c. increase in their wages. The mill-owners were prepared to give only 20 p.c. Gandhi after careful investigation thought 35 p.c. to be a reasonable mean and persuaded the weavers to accept it. They obeyed but the mill-owners proved obdurate and would not budge an inch. They would yield, they would not be led by the arbitrators; they determined to exhaust the weavers. The weavers too were equally determined and strengthened their determination by means of a solemn vow.

The situation began to grow critical every day. The ignorant, illiterate and unorganised weavers could carry on the struggle only so long as their personal savings lasted. And then? Gandhi could easily have maintained them on funds collected by public subscriptions. But staunch believer that he is in the law of work and human dignity, he would not allow the weavers to degrade themselves by seeking maintenance out of charity. He, therefore, tried to find work for them. But to provide work for 10,000 idle people taxed even his wits to their end. Besides such is the lifelessness to which the mill-work reduces the operatives, that they were found to be incapable, both physically as well as temperamentally for any other kind of honest work. So their discontent began to increase. "Twenty days" writes Gandhi describing the situation, "passed by; hunger and the mill-owners' emissaries were producing their effect and Satan was whispering to the men that there was no such thing as God on earth who would help them and that vows were dodges resorted to by weaklings." It pained Gandhi's heart to find demo-

realisation creeping in. Will 10,000 persons break their solemn oath; Will they, just to stave off their hunger defy all obligation of Truth? The thought was heart-rending; but what could he do? What was the remedy? "It is all right for Gandhisahab to lecture us to fight unto death! But we have to starve!" That was the burden of the weavers' grumbling. Gandhi's magnanimity was equal to the occasion. When he asked the weavers rather to starve and die than break their vows, he too was willing to give up his life for their cause. "Let us both starve" he said, "in trying to keep your vows"; at once the situation was changed. Order and confidence were restored in the minds of the strikers. The mill-owners were terrified. They were in a fix. In spite of their self-interests, they were (and are) proud of Gandhi and to allow their saintly citizen to starve was too much for them. They came to terms. The strike was to be called off and the matter was to be referred to arbitration; and in the meanwhile the strikers had to get 35 p. c. increase on the first day 20 p. c. on the second and $27\frac{1}{2}$ p. c. on all subsequent days till the award of the arbitrators was announced. By the decision of the arbitrators an increase of 35 p. c. was granted to the weavers whose average monthly wages now amounted to about Rs. 50.

In friendly circles, Gandhi was complimented for having achieved results by "means simple and yet almost impossibly heroic." A facetious critic, however, said:—

"The issue is more entertaining than heroic. But after all, heroics were surely a little bit out of place in a matter of economics. The compromise is suggestive.

Why not bring the war to an end by some such compromise, allowing all parties to fulfil their war-purposes for a single day ? The Emperors of Germany and Austria might march into Paris and stay there for a single day and dictate their terms of peace. And on the same day, the allied generals might march into Berlin and stay there for a single day and dictate their terms of peace. Reuter could then telegraph 'Thank God, all over. Honourable settlement arrived at'. Both sides would have won the war."

Far more important from the Government's standpoint was Gandhi's leadership of the sturdy agriculturists of Kaira. The Champaran inquiry and the Ahmedabad labour troubles affected the Government only indirectly. But in inaugurating the *Satyagraha* campaign in Kaira, Gandhi touched the Bureaucracy directly and at their tenderest and most vital point. If there is anything of which the Bureaucrats stand in mortal dread, it is the contact of the educated passive resisters with the docile agriculturists. Let the educated Indian confine his activities to his limited sphere; the Government can neglect him. But once the great agricultural communities are patriotically awakened, there would be no end to the difficulties of the Bureaucrats. It was for this reason, that the no-rent campaign (1896) of Lokamanya Tilk proved an eye-sore to many Government officials. For twenty-one years after that memorable fight, the Indian peasant meekly gave Government dues, come plenty, come famine. But early in 1918, the peasantry of Kaira determined to give battle to the Bureaucracy; and in this determination they could rely upon the active support of Gandhi.

To put it most mildly, it was a matter of difference of opinion between them and the Government officials. That they were entitled, according to the revenue laws of the land, to full suspension in case the yield of crops was under four annas in the rupee was not disputed. But the Government officials insisted that the crops were well above six annas in the rupee and hence no suspension, total or partial,—except to a hundred odd villages—could be granted. Gandhi contended that as “the Government’s valuation of the crops was derived in the first instance from the tainted source of Talatis, who, as a class, are obsequious, unscrupulous and tyrannical and (hence) presumably biased against the ryots” and as it militated against the statements and information of (the Hon.) Mr. G. K. Parekh, Mr. V. J. Patel, Messrs. Devdhar, Joshi and Thakkar of the Servants of India Society, the Government ought in fairness “if they have any regard for popular opinion” at least ‘appoint an impartial Committee of inquiry with the cultivators’ representatives upon it.’ But the authorities were willing neither “to gracefully accept the popular view” nor to refer the matter to arbitration. Considerations of prestige could not induce the officials to accept Gandhi’s indictment of the Talatis and of their callous ways of collecting Government dues and as regards the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry that was considered to be a virtual abdication by the Government of its inherent prerogatives. If once such matters are referred to arbitration, then there would be no end of trouble to the Government. So the negotiations failed; interviews, correspondence, deputations were unavailing; and Gandhi, who had himself,

investigated the matter by a personal visit to over fifty villages, had to fall back upon his matchless weapon of *Satyagraha*; and on march 22nd, 1918, the following declaration was signed by scores of Kaira agriculturists:-

"Knowing that the crops of our villages are less than four annas, we had requested the Government to suspend the revenue collection till the ensuing year. As, however, the Government has not acceded to our prayer, we, the undersigned, hereby solemnly declare that we shall not pay the full or remaining revenue but we will let the Government take such legal steps as they may think fit to collect the same, and we shall gladly suffer all the consequences of our refusal to pay."

The number of these passive resisters ultimately rose up to over 2,000. Propaganda work in the villages was carried on with immense enthusiasm by Messrs. V. J. Patel, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Shankarlal Banker, Ratansi Dharamsi, Manu Subhedar, Mohanlal Pandya and many others. Gandhi was blamed for having inaugurated the movement at a time when the European War was entering a critical stage. He replied by pointing out that there could not be "seasons when a man must suspend his conscience." "War cannot be permitted to give a license to the officials to exact obedience to their orders, even though the *root* may consider them to be unreasonable and unjust." He also showed how "the Kaira *ryot* are solving an Imperial problem of the first magnitude in India" by demonstrating that "it is impossible to govern men without their consent." "To-day the Civil Service rule is a rule of fear, the Kaira *ryot* is fighting for the rule of love."

What was net result of this agitation? The Bureau-cracy may boast that 92 per cent. of the assessment was recovered, and where the *ryots* were determined not to pay Government dues, money was recovered by means of attachments. Gandhi never said that the Government could not realize their dues. The immense power wielded by the revenue authorities can enable them to put the screw to the required extent. The real advantage gained by the *ryots* of Kaira was that they learnt to be self-respecting patriotic men. They understood their rights; they understood how to get those rights vindicated. They were familiarized with the law of suffering. They now no longer were afraid of *Ma Bap Sarkar*; and even the Commissioner had to respect all their susceptibilities in trying to persuade them to pay. On 12th April, the Commissioner addressed the agriculturists in a memorable speech. The following extract from his speech speaks for itself:—

“Mahatma Gandhi is an exceedingly good and saintly soul. And whatever advice he gives us, he does with the purest of intentions. His advice is that you should not pay the assessment because thereby you would safeguard the interests of the poor. When you say that the poor must be protected, do you mean to say that the Government does not protect them? I repeat that Mahatma Gandhi is a most saintly character. (But) all the penalties, *Chothias*, fines and forfeitures are not going to be on him but on you. The benign Government will be painfully forced to inflict them. And yet they will do so without any bitterness towards you. Why should you suffer all these penalties—fines,

forfeitures, *Chothais*, dismemberment of *Narwa* and so forth?"

The studied moderation of the whole speech was itself no small compliment to the agriculturists. It was really, a spectacle to see peasant after peasant getting up, after the speech was over and telling the Commissioner face to face that he would not, on conscientious grounds, pay the dues.

While the movement was in full swing, the critical stage the war had entered necessitated the convening of a "popular conference" and accordingly Lord Chelmsford appealed to all sections of the populace to sink differences and co-operate with the Government in making the Delhi War Conference an entire success. The Bureaucrats, however, were not willing to forget their differences with Mrs Besant, Lokamanya Tilak and the Ali Brothers. They were, therefore, required perforce to show marked regard for Mahatma Gandhi and orders were hastily issued not to exact payment from the poor and thus to bring about the end of the Kaira struggle.

Gandhi's success in the Champaran inquiry and Kaira campaign heartened him to try his weapon of *Satyagraha* on a larger issue; and accordingly, when, in spite of the emphatic protest of United India, the Rowlatt Act was passed, he inaugurated a movement from the ultimate effects of which India has not yet been wholly freed.

CHAPTER XI

BRICK-BATS AND BULLETS

What power is there in this world to rob me of my freedom ?
For do not Thy arms reach the captive through the dungeon
walls, bringing unfettered release to the soul ?

And must I cling to this body in fear of death, as a miser to
his barren treasure ? Has not this spirit of mine, the eternal
call to the feast of ever-lasting life ?

Rabindranath Tagore.

TOWARDS the close of 1917, the Government of India, with a fore-sight worthy of a better cause appointed what is known as the Rowlatt Committee for "investigating and reporting on the nature and extent of criminal conspiracies and to advise as to the legislation, if any, necessary to enable the Government to deal effectively with them." Feeling that the Great War was drawing to a close and with it, the lease of life of the Defence of India Act, the hide-bound bureaucrats, who by choice and inclination depend more on repression than on conciliation decided to arm themselves with emergency powers. Even then, it is doubtful whether they would have had the hardihood to accept the chief recommendations of the "Sedition

Committee" had not the obstructive tactics of the Hon. Mr. Khaparde singularly failed on account of the "superior wisdom" of most of the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council and his motion for an indefinite postponement of the consideration of the Sedition Committee's Report thrown out within less than three hours discussion. When members like Messrs Sastri, Sapru and Surendranath strongly opposed Mr. Khaparde, the Government in all probability thought that with a skilful manoeuvring, they could rely on the acquiescence, if not the active support of the leaders of the Moderate Party. The dramatic termination of the War elated them. The bitterness and divided counsels at Delhi augured well; the absence of Lokamanya Tilak in England was also a good sign. Gandhi, they thought, could be safely neglected. The Liberal Secretary-of-State for India was willing to barter away India's cherished freedom for his scheme of administrative reforms. The Moderates were equally solicitous about the passage of the Government of India Bill; could they not be coaxed into accepting Mr. Montague's position? All things considered, this appeared to be the most favourable moment for launching an attack on India's freedom and the Simla bureaucrats were not slow to take advantage of the opportunity.

But they had counted without their host. Whatever the faults of the Moderates, they have never lacked patriotism. They have always been slow to learn; but though slow, they do learn; and even the blandishments of the bureaucrats were powerless to wipe out the bitter mortification of finding the glib promises given

at the passing of the Press Act melting like mists in the administrative sun. Though eager to conciliate and to compromise, the Moderates were steeped in the Liberalism of Burke, Bright and Gladstone. How could they sanction a legislation which in seeking to "provide for the speedy trial of Anarchical and revolutionary movements" created a machinery where trials would be conducted "expeditiously, without commitment, with no right of appeal and sometimes *in camera*" How could they sanction the partial suspension of safe-guards provided by the C. P. Code or the Evidence Act? How could they bear to see—even for the short space of three years—the Executive running amuck and the political suspects practically thrown to the tender mercies of the Police?

It was very well for the *Times of India* to declare that the "Bills threatened none but those engaged in revolutionary crime, that the law-abiding citizen need never be aware of their existence, and that even the revolutionaries themselves were secure of the most careful trial by competent authority." But as the (Right) Hon'ble Mr. Sastri point out "a bad law once passed is not always used against the bad. In times of panic, to which all alien Governments are unfortunately for too liable, I have known Governments to lose their heads, I tell you, when the Government undertakes a repressive policy, the innocent are not safe. The possession, in the hands of the Executive, of powers of this drastic nature will not hurt only the wicked, and there will be such a lowering of public spirit, that all talk of responsible government will be mere mockery. You may enlarge the councils, but the men that will fill the

councils will be toadies; timid men, and the bureaucracy will reign unchecked under the outward forms of a democratic government". But neither the wisdom of Mr. Sastri, nor the eloquence of Mr. Banerjee, nor yet, the cold merciless logic of Mr. Jinnah was of any avail. The Government was determined not to yield, and on March 18th, 1919, the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers Bill) was passed, in spite of the united opposition of all elected Indian members.

No protest could have been more effective than a dramatic and simultaneous resignation of their seats by all the twenty members of the Imperial Legislative Council who had voted against the passing of the measure. But the opposition of the Moderates always begins in words and ends in words and is never translated into action. Unfortunately, even the few extremist or semi-Extremist members did not resign in a body. The Hon. Mr. Sarma—a Moderate—resigned in haste and withdrew also his resignation in haste; and the "beginning of the end" of freedom foreshadowed by him proved to be only the beginning of the end of his connection with the popular party. Pandit Malaviya, Mr. Mazharul Haque and Mr. B. D. Shukul resigned a few days later. So did Mr. Jinnah who was cynically reminded by his Anglo-Indian friends that "notwithstanding his resignation and the published grounds thereof the sun will rise to-morrow morning and set to-morrow evening". Well, it can hardly be expected that the sun which has seen the rises and falls of empires and which will witness the rises and falls of empires would refuse to ply its chariot in the sky for such a simple reason as Mr. Jinnah's resignation.

Quite a different kind of protest came from a quarter least expected. None had thought that Gandhi, who had recently escaped, after a prolonged illness, from the jaws of death and who was still very weak would take even an ordinary share in the agitation going on in the country. But his will was stronger than his frail body and to a conscientious man like himself, the Government of the day probably left no choice. After "many a sleepless" night he took the step—"probably the most momentous in the history of India"—of proclaiming Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. He issued a Manifesto and the celebrated Covenant the signatories to which bound themselves "civilly to refuse to obey the Rowlatt Act and such other laws as a Committee to be here-after appointed may think fit". The Satyagraha Sabha, consisting of Mrs. Naidu and of Messrs. Horniman, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Jamnadas Mehta, L. R. Tairree, Shankarlal Banker and many others was formed and the work of getting signatories to the pledge proceed very briskly, as many as 1200 enlisting their names within a fortnight.

The gospel of Civil Disobedience has come to stay in India and the hero of the Champaran and Kaira struggles was the fittest man to lead the country to victory. The defenders of law and order preached their usual sermons. "It is so easy," they said "to loosen respect for the law, so easy to say that all violence must be scrupulously avoided and at the same time to set in motion currents which will lead by sure and direct paths to the adoption of violence and the suffering of the innocent. The sense of lawlessness, once aroused, is not easily allayed; the appetite grows

with feeding and the spirit of lawlessness so soon becomes uncontrollable that almost in the twinkling of an eye, it may pass from a protest into a general lawlessness which threatens the whole foundation of society." Even accepting for the sake of argument the truth of every word of the above homily, the question naturally arises "who is really responsible for this "general loosening of respect for the law?" Is it the maker of a bad law or a conscientious citizen who feels it his duty to offer Civil Disobedience to the bad law? With Gandhi, the sole question was "how to afford a healthy outlet to the feelings of hatred and ill-will" that were bound to be intensified by the Act. The Indian Conventaners" said Gandhi "by their determination to undergo every kind of suffering, provide to the believers in the efficacy of violence, as a means of securing redress of grievances, with an infallible remedy and withal a remedy that blesses those that use it and also those against whom it is used.

In the course of this agitation, Gandhi was helped by several followers of Mr. Besant, headed by Mr. Jamnadas Dwarakadas. But the gifted lady herself was, for a considerable time vacillating between support and opposition. Early in March, she had signed the Covenant minus the Committee part of it and had pledged herself civilly to disobey the Act. But the crux of the question was the Committee part of the Covenant. It is not true to say as Mrs. Besant has declared "The changes brought about by the non-official members ere the Bill was passed removed the clauses that could have been broken unless one joined a revolutionary and anarchical movement in connection with which

crimes were prevalent. The pledge has therefore become inoperative and I cannot call on any one to sign it." Even the *Times of India* which welcomed Mrs. Besant's conversion pointed out that "the reason which Mrs. Besant now adduces for not asking anyone to sign the pledge always existed." Except for the insertion of the words "anarchical and revolutionary crimes" in the preamble—word deliberately left undefined and liable to be extended in the bureaucratic dictionary of synonyms to legitimate political activities—it would be difficult, if not impossible even for Mrs. Besant to show any striking improvement in the Bill which necessitated her change of attitude. But the prospect of disobeying several laws, hitherto ungrudgingly accepted, as a mark of protest against the Rowlatt Act scared not only her but many others. "The Bills are aimed at anarchical movements which no one wants to exist. If there is anyone how holds that he has a sacred mission to carry on anarchical conspiracies, he is the man to passive-resist these Bills. The people of India do not want anarchism and therefore cannot adopt an attitude of passive resistance to these Bills when they become laws. The opposition of Indian opinion being not to the aim but to the methods of the Rowlatt Bills, passive resistance must distinguish between the two. Since this is impossible, passive resistance is inapplicable in this case." Minds that had lost their edge by submission to long-continued tyranny might delight in this hair-splitting. To Gandhi, the position was simply intolerable. To allow the Act to disfigure the Statute-Book even for a day and wait for Government to take some initiative and then 'passive-resist' the Act was

simply ridiculous. Gandhi therefore decided to have other laws, not involving moral sanction, selected for disobedience and this work he delegated to the Committee appointed for the purpose.

The Committee-part of the pledge unfortunately created much misunderstanding. But what was the alternative? Gandhi was too democratic to appropriate the work to himself. Once the principle of disobeying other laws is conceded, the need of appointing an expert Committee is obvious enough. Had the matter been left to individual conscience, confusion would have been the result. Some persons, however chose to consider the question in a different light. "How can we" they asked "hand over the keys of our conscience to a committee however competent it may be?" Those who brought forward this argument forgot that this was not a question of conscience. No law having the slightest moral sanction was to be disobeyed. This was purely a question of expediency in the highest sense of the term. If in matters of details every member of an organization is to become a law unto himself, then good-bye to all concerted action. It would, of course, have been better, and Gandhi, in order to disarm his critics, published a tentative list of laws selected or to be selected for disobedience. Perhaps he wanted to move very cautiously and develop his scheme only with the development of the situation. He however willingly met his critics half-way by detailing the considerations that would guide the Committee in the work of selection—

(1) To select such laws only as can be disobeyed in dividually.

(2) To select, as a first step, laws that have evoked popular disapproval.

(3) To select laws whose civil breach would constitute an education for the people.

To begin with, it was decided to civilly disobey the laws regasding prohibited literature and the registration of newspapers. the prohibited literature selected for sale was of a clean type, perfectly consistent with the spirit of Satyagraha.

Before Gandhi's accession to Indian politics, the national *hartals* were neither systematic, not well-organized. Gandhi has been the first to use them for distinct political purposes ; and in his hands they have proved the most effective means of mass-education. They provide both the leaders as well as the Government officials with an infalliable test of the intensity of popular feeling over a particular question. On this occassion, Gandhi called for an all-India complete *Hartal* on the first (subsequently changed to second) ' Sunday after the publication of the Viceregal Assent to Bill No. 2 of 1918." To emphasize the religious character of the struggle, he desired Indians to observe 6th April as a day of " humiliation and prayet." A twenty- four hour's fast was recommended to be observt ed by all adults, partly as a " necessary discipline to fit Satyagrahis for Civil Disobedience " and partly as a " slight token of the intensity of the wounded feelings " of Indians.

Though the majority of the Indian provinces were sympathetically disposed to the new campaigni Gandhi's influence was greatest in Bombay, Gujarati the Madra Presidency and the Province of Delhi; and it was these

parts of the country that he naturally sought to organize first. To Madras, he gave nearly three weeks of his time. In lucid, stirring and convincing lectures he appealed to his vast audiences to rise to the occasion and remember that they were descendants of Dhruva and Pralhad. "Out of the travail of the soul is a nation" born he said; "the voice of disciplined conscience is the voice of the Divine; and to resist those commands which are in violation with conscience is a sacred privilege and a beauty." He pointed out that Satyagraha was a divine weapon. "The doctrine of violence is of the earth and can be no guide for a human being who at all believes in the existence of the soul." "No country had ever risen, no nation had ever been made without sacrifice" and he urged his hearers to respond to his call in a manner worthy of their noble traditions.

Though the first Sunday following the Viceroy's Assent to the Black Act was originally decided upon as a day of humiliation and prayer, still as the Assent was received earlier than was usual or expected, April 6th was fixed in place of 30th March as the *Hartal* day. But at Dehli, where the news of the Viceregal Assent was naturally received earlier, a complete *Hartal* for March 30th was being vigorously organized; and the news of the postponement of the *Hartal* day was received too late for the demonstration to be cancelled. The signal success of the *Hartal* seems to have exasperated the official word. An "altercation,"—to use the strongest word—between a couple of Satyagrahis and the sweet-vendor at the Railway station led up to the former's arrests. The mob outside the Railway gates demanded their release and from this small beginning

ensued a scuffle over which it is better, in the interests of the reputation of the Bureaucracy of Delhi, to throw a veil. Even assuming every word of the Government communique on the subject to be true, was it not the case of "making use of a Nasmyth hammer to crush a fly"? and though Mrs. Beasant declared that "a Government's first duty is to stop violence before a riot becomes unmanageable; brick-bats must inevitably be answered by bullets. in every civilised country; still the Government theory of economizing in bloodshed stands self-condemned in the face of the fact that before scores of innocent persons were wounded or killed no Riot Act was read or blank firing resorted to. How orderly the people were, can be demonstrated by the fact that even after these most painful incidents and while the military was yet in a threatening mood, Swami Shraddhanand could hold a mass meeting of 40,000 persons. But "unfortunately in India, it has become customary to summon the military on the slightest pretext" and thus the Delhi tragedy occurred, steeling the hearts both of the Government as well as the Satyagrahis for the impending struggle.

The National Humiliation Day was observed in a befitting manner at Bombay, Delhi, Lahore, Amritsar, Ahmedabad, Allahabad and other principle cities in the country. The message of Satyagraha had filtered down even to hamlets and the "Black Sunday"—as it was called—was celebrated everywhere in a manner which greatly impressed even the Government officials. They realized that if even one-tenth of the sentiment soused in the demonstrations was properly used it meant an end of the autocratic rule of the Civil

Service and April 6th was only the first day of this mighty campaign of Satyagraha.

But the inauguration of the movement was almost immediately followed by its suspension. Immediately after the commencement of the sale of his unregistered newspaper Satyagrahi and of the sale of proscribed literature and before the Government of Bombay, who were carefully watching all these demonstrations took any action thereon, Gandhi was called to Delhi and to the Punjab, and while on his way to Dehli, he was served (April 10th) at Kosi with orders not to enter the Punjab, not to enter Delhi and to restrict himself to Bombay. It was impossible for Gandhi to obey these orders. He elected to disobey them and was forthwith arrested at Palwal. In his historic message to his countrymen, he said :—

“ It was galling to me to remain free while the Rowlatt legislation disfigured the Statute-Book. My arrest makes me free. It now remains for you to do your duty which is clearly stated in the Satyagraha pledge. I have received what I was seeking—either the withdrawal of the Rowlatt legislation or imprisonment. A departure from the Truth by a hair's breadth or violence committed against anybody, whether Englishman or Indian will surely damn the Great Cause, the Satyagrahis are handling. ”

The inconceivable folly of the Government in arresting Gandhi at a time when they knew—Gandhi's colleagues at Delhi and Amritsar had sent him repeated telegraphic invitations for the sole purpose of pacifying the people there—that he was going on a mission of peace, was severely criticised by all. The Hon. Mr. Sastri

said "Mr. Gandhi was the sort of man to have been called as an ally to ally the situation; for to appeals of this nature, Gandhi is peculiarly susceptible." Even the *Times of India* frankly declared "we, who know Mr. Gandhi well and understand, if we cannot always agree with his ideals and methods may well feel that in time of excitement and unrest, nothing but good can come from his presence in a disturbed zone." The Punjab and the Delhi Governments thought otherwise and the Government of India seem to have agreed with them. But the steps they took to ensure peace and order resulted in blood-shed; for, almost immediately, on hearing the news of Gandhi's arrest the mobs at Amritsar, Ahmedabad, Viramgam and other places lost all self-control and so far forgot Gandhi's message of non-violence, that murder and arson were committed, in broad day-light amidst shouts of "Mahatma Gandhiki Jay." The situation, especially the Punjab situation had gone quite out of hand; and it was probably this reason which induced the Government to revise their policy; and all legal sophistry was used by its supporters in trying to shatter "the legend of Mr. Gandhi's arrest" when he was merely "detained." Had the Government announced, in time, their intention of merely detaining Gandhi and turning him back to Bombay, the situation would have been relieved; but when the timely opening of lips would have saved hundreds of lives, they elected to observe a mysterious and inexcusable silence.

Gandhi was deeply pained at the sudden out-break of mob-violence. "A rapier run through my body" he said "could hardly have pained me more." He

addressed meetings at Bombay and Ahmedabad reassuring the people and severely condemning them for allowing murder and arson to be committed. Realizing the immensity of his responsibility, he observed a three days' fast as a slight penance. A greater, more humiliating penance than the fast, he decided to practise;—he would not go to Delhi and seek re-arrest. For some time, he thought that Satyagraha could be continued on a limited scale; and the work of getting signatories to the Covenant was proceeding vigorously; the sale of prescribed literature was not stopped; and Gandhi issued one or two numbers more of his unregistered newspaper, *Satyagrahi*. But the tale of frightful repression and dismal suffering that was every day leaking from the Punjab convinced him of the wisdom and utter necessity of temporarily suspending the movement. In his letter (18th April) to the Satyagraha Sabha, he said:—

“I give this advice (of temporarily suspending the movement of Civil Disobedience not because I have less faith now in its efficacy but because I have, if possible, greater faith than before. I am sorry that when I embarked upon a mass movement, I under-rated the forces of evil and I must now pause and consider how best to meet the situation. Satyagraha has neither been the cause, nor the occasion of the upheaval. Satyagraha is like a banian tree with innumerable branches. Civil Disobedience is one such branch. *Satya* and *Ahimsa* together make the patent trunk from which all the innumerable branches shoot out. We have found out by bitter experience that whilst in an atmosphere of lawlessness, Civil Disobedience

found ready acceptance, Satya and Ahimsa from which alone. Civil Disobedience can worthily spring, have commanded little or no respect. We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa. We must ceaselessly help the authorities in all the ways available to us as Satyagrahis to restore order and curb lawlessness."

This decision deeply disappointed and mortified his followers. The only persons to compliment him on his great moral courage were the enemies of the movement. It was Gandhi's intention to revive the struggle in August (1919), but on further consideration and consultation, he thought it better to surpend it *sine die*.

Was Gandhi justified in thus twice suspending the movement and practically giving up the agitation against the Rowlatt Act? Critics have differed, and as we have just remarked his friends have condemned him and enemies of the Satyagraha struggle have applauded him. Considering the question from a strictly historical stand-point, we believe that Gandhi was in the right. Gandhi himself has declared that the mere outbreak of violence in an isolated area would not deter him from starting or continuing his campaign of Civil Disobedience. But if, in stead of being a forgettable or negligible episode, the irruption of violence and its aftermath become matters of paramount importance, it is always better to cry halt. We lament his decision (because of the Chauri Chura tragedy) to suspend Civil Disobedience at Bardoli and consider it to be hasty and unstatesmanlike, because that tragedy was no more important than the scenes enacted at Bombay, Malegaon or Dharwar. "We

could isolate Malegaon, we could isolate Bombay but we cannot isolate Chauri Chura;"—thus said Gandhi. The course of history, however, has justified Gandhi's critics and the Chauri Chura episode is known and remembered only because Gandhi thought it meet ground for suspending his Bardoli Campaign. Not only were the Proceedings against the accused in the Chauri Chura trial not noticed in the Press, but the nation had almost forgotten the thing untill one day they were reminded of it by the draconic punishment pronounced by the trying judge. But with regard to the Punjab episode, the same cannot be said. It shook the whole of India as nothing else did since the year 1857; and while its lengthening shadows were casting their gloom on the enthusiasm not of the Punjab but the whole of India a "strategic retreat" was the wisest course.

The Government was more anxious to indemnify their officers than hold a prompt inquiry, and their first exploit after peace and order were perfectly restored, was to place before the Imperial Legislative Council the Indemnity Bill. The unexpected support they received from Gandhi rendered more difficult the heroic work of Pandit Madan Mohan but for whose intrepidity, persistence, and resourcefulness, the tale of frightful repression in the land of the five rivers would perhaps never have been known. The Hunter Commission was appointed. The Congress had also appointed its own Commissioners with Gandhi at their head. They worked for more than three months, examined nearly 2,000 witnesses and towards the end of February 1920 prepared their historic report. The report was

characterized by Gandhi's idealism and truthfulness. Not a statement was made that would not stand closest scrutiny. Gandhi impressed upon his brother-Commissioners the necessity rather of understating the Indian case than of overstating it; and the conclusions arrived at by the Commission are for the reason unassailable. The Commissioners revealed the true Gandhi spirit when they suggested the measures necessary for redressing wrongs done to the people. "It is our deliberate opinion" said they "that Sir M. O'Dwyer, General Dyer, Col. Johnson, Col. O'Brien, Mr. Bosworth Smith Rai Sabhi Sri Ram Sud and Malik Saheb Khan have been guilty of such illegalities that they deserve to be *impeached*, but we purposely refrain from advising any such course, because we believe that India can only gain by waiving the right,"

The statement submitted by Gandhi to the Hunter Committee is an illuminating document moderately long, full of crisp, arresting sentences, redolent of the spirit of Satyagraha. In the exhaustive cross-examination, (Jan. 1920) to which he was subjected by the members of the Hunter Committee, he left rather the impression of one who would gladly co-operate in its arduous labours than that of an opponent who would fain cloud the issues and leave the witness-box without saying all that he was called upon to do; and this is the more remarkable as some of the members of the Committee, with all their unmistakable urbanity sought to out-wit Gandhi and extract from him admissions damaging to his cause. Gandhi, who had nothing to conceal proved more than a match for all the legal acumen of the committee put together.

The Amritsar Congress was a Satyagraha Congress in every respect and was a fitting conclusion of Gandhi's activities of 1919 in connection with the Punjab. It was a memorable Congress in many respects and if for nothing else it will ever remain memorable for the fact that it was at Amritsar that for the first and last time, Gandhi and Tilak stood on the same political platform in a sort of mild opposition. Tilak was a warrior through and through and a statesman to boot, while the predominating characteristic of Gandhi is saintliness. While Tilak could appreciate penance, forgiveness, charity and allied virtues in individual cases, he knew that these admirable qualities were a great handicap in fights with the Bureaucracy and in his opinion, condemnation of the excesses of mobs in April 1919 in the Punjab and Gujarat would have an appearance of unreality about it and was sure to prove in future, a perpetual source of trouble. The mob-condemning resolution was moved by Gandhi. Speaking to the resolution, he said :—

“Real manliness consists in not retaliating even when under a shower of bullets. to suffer evil patiently and with the opposition of Good. That is the spirit of real heroes. That is why I want you to condemn the excesses of mobs. I am glad I have been the instrument in exhorting you to do this deed of penance. I warn you to appreciate the solemnity of the proposition. The whole key to future work lies in your recognizing the eternal truth underlying the resolution. Do not return madness with madness; return madness with sanity.”

Knowing Gandhi's intimate and personal connection

with the Satyagraha movement of 1919. Tilak was chivalrous enough not to interfere with the passing of this resolution, though he wanted politics to be guided by human and not etherial considerations. He believed that mere saintliness was no match for twentieth century Imperialism. "Diplomacy" he thought "must be met with diplomacy." That the mob-condemning resolution was allowed to be passed principally in deference to Gandhi is well-known; and it is interesting to recall that those who could not good-humouredly keep their opposition to themselves took some other opportunity to give vent to their pent-up feelings: Prof Jitendralal Banarjea was one of them and "in supporting the next resolution he delivered a deadly satirical speech directed against the spirit of patience and forbearance preached by Mr. Gandhi."

But while Gandhi's noble sentiment was allowed to prevail in the mob-condemning resolution, he had a thick wall of opposition to encounter when he sought to infuse the same spirit into the Reforms Resolution. As Lokamanya Tilak significantly said:—

"We want now clearly to declare not only here but to the whole world that we are not satisfied with the Act. We want to continue our agitation. We want to utilize it to our best advantage and demand more, continue to demand more and we want to ask the rest of the world to know that this is the exact state of our feelings. Do not mislead the civilised nations of the world. Take care of that. Do not be too generous, too kind, too humane, to accept with fulsome gratitude, the little thas has been thrown to you."

Fortunately or unfortunately, it is Gandhi's nature to

be "too generous, too kind, too humane." He simply cannot help being so. He therefore moved an amendment to the Reforms resolutions moved by Mr. Das and seconded by Mr. Tilak. The final form taken by his amendment was as follows :—

"In clause B omit the word 'disappointing' at the end and add the following clause after clause C :— Pending such introduction, this Congress begs loyally to respond to the sentiments expressed in the Royal Proclamation and trusts that both the authorities and the people will co-operate so to work the reforms as to secure the early establishment of full Responsible Government."

He also insisted upon Mr. Montague being thanked for his labours in connection with the reforms. Speaking in support of his amendment, Gandhi said :—

"Nothing would have pleased me more than to have been able to be absent from this day's session and not divide the assembly in open house on the question of the reforms if I had not felt that there is a conflict of principles involved in the question. I feel my duty demands that I should say a word on the question even though I find myself ranged against leaders and friends like Mr. Tilak and Mr. Das. They have failed to appeal to either my head or my heart and further I feel that the acceptance of the position as embodied in the Reforms resolution placed before the Congress means giving a wrong lead to the country. I agree with the substance of the Reforms resolution except for the characterisation of the Reforms Act as disappointing. Those who feel that the reforms are disappointing cannot use them. I can understand an

attitude of rejection and non-co-operation with the Government but I would challenge that position for I think that it is not right and the country is not prepared for it and I would go from one part of the country to another saving so. Mr. Tilak had told us, the country and Mr. Montague that he is going to work the Reform Act fully. Let him then be true to himself and the country and say so. If there is to be the working of the Reform Act, it means co-operation."

Temperamentally, Gandhi is so constituted that he can understand an attitude of rejection and non-co-operation" only; he cannot appreciate the politically more effective attitude advocated by Lokamanya Tilak. The need for unity, however, induced him to arrive at a suitable compromise with Messrs Tilak and Das and the final form taken by the Reform Resolutions was a unique combination of the political spirit of Tilak and Gandhi. How unfortunate for the country that at the next session of the Congress, the former was not alive to infuse his own spirit into the otherwise admirable resolution on Non-co-operation!

CHAPTER XII

NON-CO-OPERATION

अलमस्मि शमार्थाय अलं युद्धाय संजय ।

धर्मार्थयोरलं चस्मि मृदवे दारुणाय च ॥ महाभारत

Oh, for a man, who is a man and as my neighbour says, has a bone in his back which you cannot pass your hand through ? The mass of men serves the state not as men but as machines, with their bodies. There is no free exercise of the judgment or of the moral sense. A very few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men, serve the state with their consciences also and so necessarily resist it for the most part and they are commonly treated as enemies by it. A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be "clay" and "stop a hole to keep the wind away."

Thoreau.

WHILE the attention of most public-spirited Indians was directed, towards the close of 1919, to the passing of the Government of India Act, Gandhi's hopes and fears as also the major portion of his time were given to the solution of the Khalifat problem. Having ascertained, strengthened and proclaimed the Muslim feeling over this delicate question by means of an all India Khilafat *Hartal* (October 17th) which

impressed even on Anglo-India "the fierce feeling of uneasiness and discontent which pervades the Moslem mind" Gandhi proceeded to consider how to direct that feeling into non-violent but effective channels. With this object in view, the first Khilfat Conference was held at Delhi (Nov. 24). Speaking in Urdu as President of the Conference, Gandhi said:—

"We talk of Hindu-Mahomedan Unity. It would be an empty phrase if the Hindus held aloof from the Mahomedans when their vital interests were at stake. Some have suggested that we Hindus can assist our Mahomedan countrymen only on conditions. Conditional assistance is like adulterated cement which does not bind. The only question, therefore, is how to help. The Khilafat Conference has come to the decision not to participate in the forth-coming Peace celebrations. To ask India to celebrate Peace while the Khilafat question remains unsettled is like expecting France to celebrate Peace pending the settlement of Alsace-Lorraine. This is a question which affects the honour of England, the pledged word of the Prime Minister. What are riches, power and military renown worth, if the honour becomes sullied? I was therefore deeply pained to see the telegraphic summary of the Prime Minister's speech which unnecessarily seemed to wound Muslim susceptibilities and to forecast a settlement of the Khilafat Question in contradiction of his own solemn word."

At Gandhi's instance, the Conference passed a resolution announcing the withholding of all co-operation from the British Government in the event of a satisfactory settlement with regard to the Turkish and

Khilafat question not being arrived at. But even the persuasion and influence of Gandhi were unable to dissuade the Conference from passing the Resolution of boycotting British goods. Gandhi's opposition to the Boycott resolution immensely satisfied the *Times of India* which had not yet fully grasped all the implications of Non-Co-operation and which apparently thought that Boycott was a more dangerous weapon than the mere withdrawal of co-operation, which appeared to be something quite negative.

Though the President of the Delhi Khilafat Conference had taken up the cause of Co-operation at the Amritsar Congress, still subsequent events soon disillusioned him and proved beyond all possibility of doubt that the noble sentiments of the Royal Proclamation had failed to filter down to the Indian Bureaucrats. The obstinacy with which the odious Press Act was kept on the Statute Book, the persistence which was still responsible for keeping Mr. Horniman out of India, the readiness with which the seditious Meetings Act was applied to an obscure corner of the U.P. were not the only straws indicative of the direction of the wind. In reply to an interpellation by the Hon. Mr. V. J. Patel, Sir William Vincent declared that the Rowlatt Act was not to be repealed. Though Mr. Patel's resolution requesting the Governor-General to give fullest effect to the letter and spirit of the Royal Proclamation in regard to clemency to political offenders was nominally accepted, still several cases were deliberately omitted, notably that of Mr. Vinayak D. Savarkar (convicted in 1910) whose offence paled into insignificance before the supposed crime of the Ali Brothers who were

released at the time of Amritsar Congress. All this showed how impossible it was for the Anglo-Indian officials to shed habits and prejudices of years; and it became increasingly clear to Gandhi that co-operation would not have a smooth course to run.

But greater than the pain of these disappointments, was the pain with which he looked on the fierce controversies that began to cast their shadows over our public life ever since the passing of the Government of India Act. It ill became us, Gandhi thought, to create controversies and fight over personalities and petty incidents at a time when every particle of the energy available to India should have been conserved for utilizing the Reforms Act for the attainment of full Responsible Government in the quickest time possible.

Through the thick clouds of all these bitter controversies, Gandhi and Tilak were trying to lead the nation to the identical goal of *Swaraj* in their own characteristic ways. The Lokamanya, while not in the least oblivious of the iniquitous terms sought to be imposed on Turkey and the inhuman atrocities perpetrated in the Punjab, wanted to absorb all the moral energy roused over these episodes and direct it in the highly intellectual path opened out by the Reforms Act. Gandhi, who originally wanted to co-operate in the working of the Reforms, found how antagonistic to his moral sense would be such a fight so long as the Punjab and Khilafat issues remained unsatisfactorily settled. While therefore Lokamanya Tilak sought to concentrate, so far as was possible, the nation's attention on Councilentry, Gandhi became more and more indifferent to the working of the Reforms and found no peace

until the Khilafat wrong was righted. While the Lokamanya was maturing his Congress Democratic Party's Manifesto, Gandhi was thinking out the details of his non-co-operation Programme.

Meanwhile, the Khilafat agitation was growing apace. In accordance with the resolution at the Delhi Conference, an influential deputation headed by Mr. Mahomed Ali was despatched to England with the full consent and blessings of Gandhi who promised to follow if his help was deemed in any way desirable. Before the delegation to Europe sailed, an influential deputation including Gandhi waited (Jan. 19, 1920) on the Viceroy. The tone of the Viceroy was sympathetic and he was ready to give whatever facilities were required. He however did not fail to indulge in the usual platitudes; he said that the decision about Turkey did not rest with Britain alone and that Turkey, having "submitted her fate to the arbitrament of the sword, cannot expect wholly to escape the consequences of her action"

The situation had become critical and the decision of the Supreme Council regarding the future of Turkey was expected at any moment, perhaps even before the Khilafat delegation would reach Europe. In India, public interest in the question was kept alive by an incessant round of meetings and Conferences, in many of which, be it said to their credit, many Moderates and National Home Rulers took very active part. But the parting of ways came at the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference (28th Feb. 1920) which declared that "no alternative now remains open but to adopt such measures as had been hitherto kept back". At

this conference also the Boycott Resolution was passed in spite of the strenuous opposition of Gandhi.

It would not be out of place to consider at this place the grounds on which Gandhi bases his opposition to the Boycott of British goods. Boiled down, these grounds reduce themselves to two (1) "Boycott of goods is a subterfuge for Boycott of the Government; we hate all subterfuge." On another occasion, Gandhi has said that our quarrel is with the British and Indian Governments and not with the British people; and so it would be unjust to punish the British people for the wrong done by their Government. In answer to this, it may be urged that if the British people acquiesce in the wrong done by the British Government, they are as much responsible for the sins of commission and omission of their Government as any Cabinet of Ministers, and that there is nothing inherently wrong if we direct our weapons as much against the British people as against their representatives or spokesmen. We may go one step further and affirm that the entire British nation is organized for commercial exploitation of all the lands subject to it and that the main business of the British Government is to defend, continue and increase this exploitation as much as possible. If the British nation could with complacency swallow all the sweets of victory, surely there is nothing morally wrong if they are now and then made to digest the bitter pill of Boycott. Indeed, to talk of the British people and the British Government as being separate and separable is to distinguish without any difference. (2) Let us now turn to Gandhi's second argument, "for a true Satyagrahi" he says, "the weapon of fight must be

clean-edged with love." A Satyagrahi fights the battle of righteousness with love as his sword. The result of the fight may embarrass or paralyze his opponent. But this is *not* his *aim*. He merely seeks the vindication of *right* by *love*. Such a vindication is possible only when in the course of the fight he invites suffering on himself. The process of the victory of a Satyagrahi is this; he fights, he suffers, he awakens the conscience of his opponent by the immensity of his sacrifice, and then stands unarmed before him, compelling him to reform. The question now is, is this only way to assert one's rights? Is self-suffering the only weapon of righteous fight? Do the canons of highest religion and ethics prohibit the infliction of suffering on others from the domain of righteous warfare? It would seem that the philosophy of the *Gita* runs counter to such an assumption. While we are discussing here the propriety of inflicting financial loss on one directly associated with our opponent, it must not be forgotten, that the *Gita* (though Gandhi considers it to be "a sermon on non-violence") came into existence as a plea for mortal fight. To Gandhi who would assume nothing not unimpeachably proved, the setting of the *Gita* may be allegorical. But to the millions of his countrymen it is not so. Was Arjuna *not* a *Satygarhi*? No devout *Hindu* will answer the question in the negative and yet the fact is to be reconciled that his *Satyagraha* was essentially different from that of Gandhi. The explanation is not difficult. Arjuna fought a *righteous* war with *righteous* weapons Gandhi wants to fight a *righteous* war with exclusively the weapon of *love*.

The hour of Turkey's trial was slowly approaching. Yet such was the optimism of Gandhi, that while moving the principal resolution on the 2nd Khilafat Day at Bombay (19th March 1920) he declared that 'there is still a silver lining in the cloud that has gathered over-head.' While hoping for the best he asked his hearers to be prepared for the worst. "I yield to none" said he "in my loyalty to the British connection, but I must refuse to buy that loyalty at the price of honour and at the sacrifice of the deeply stirred religious sentiments of one-fifth of my countrymen. A loyalty that sells its soul is worth nothing and if, in spite of the acknowledged services of Indian soldiers, both Hindu and Mahomedan, during the late war, the promises made my British statesmen are broken I do not lose hope, but if the hope is disappointed and the worst happens, God alone knows what will happen to this fair land of ours."

The *Hartal* organized on this day (19th March) was a signal success. It was not only spontaneous and voluntary but also characterized by the large-heartedness of its principal organizer who went out of his way in advising the mill-hands—who had recently had a tussel with the Bombay capitalists—not to participate in the *Hartal* without the previous permission of their masters. This utter scrupulousness of methods bespeaks the religious heart of Gandhi.

Whatever vague hopes were entertained were dashed to the ground and whatever uneasy fears had disturbed the Muslim peace of mind were but too clearly materialized, when towards the end of March, the amazing, cynical and over-bearing reply of the Premier to the

Khilafat Deputation was cabled to India. After commending the lucidity and moderation with which the Delegation had submitted its case, the Premier blamed Turkey for having suddenly declared war on England and thus prolonged the struggle by at least two years. "Now Turkey, like Germany and Austria, has been beaten. Germany Austria have paid penalty for defeat and we cannot apply different principles in the settlement of a Mahomedan country from those which we sternly applied to our settlement with Christian communities." The Premier repeated the stock arguments about the Arabs longing for Independence, surprised his hearers by declaring that "after very careful investigation by an impartial committee it had been found that considerable majority of the population (Smyrna) was non-Turkish and more in favour of the Greek yoke than the Moslem. He admitted indeed that no Impartial investigation had taken place regarding the Armenian massacres but declared that "Islam had no reason to be proud of the Turkish dominion." The import and more especially the tone of the Premier's reply conclusively proved that no sympathy would be shown to Turkey. It was clear that India must resort to Non-co-operation. The question now remained, when the movement should be started, whether immediately or after the "Peace terms are officially known." The Sub-Committee (appointed by the All-India Khilafat Committee) consisting of Messrs Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Abul Kalam Azad unanimously resolved that the latter course (that of waiting till the official announcement was made) should be adopted. The question of a

Deputation to England headed by Gandhi was mooted, and the idea was approved of but later dropped. Fortunately the Moslems were not kept long in suspense. The refusal of the Supreme Council to allow the Khilafat Deputation to present its case clearly showed that Turkish Dismemberment had been decided upon and at last a Gazette of India Extra-ordinary announced (May 14th) the Peace Terms presented by the Allies to Turkey.

Misfortunes never come single and to rouse those of the lethargic Hindus whose interest in the Khilafat was luke-warm, Providence sent the Punjab Reports. To the terrible revelations of the Congress Sub-Committee was added the provoking white-wash of the Hunter Committee, the Secretary of State and the Government of India. All India was aflame to find Lord Chelmsford actually "complimenting" Sir Michael O'Dwyer on his signal services! General Dyer's inhuman and cowardly attack on an unarmed and unprepared mob was designated merely as "a grave error". When the Congress Sub-Committee's Report was published (March 1920) the Commissioners were blamed by the majority of the Indian Press for the mistaken moderation of their findings. But when the astounding conclusions of the Imperial Government and the Government of India on the majority Report of the Hunter Committee were known, it became clear to the meanest intellect that co-operation under such circumstances would be a shame and humiliation and that the only course possible for the nation was to unsheathe the sword of Non-Co-operation.

Under these circumstances, Gandhi was not prepared

to allow grass to grow under his feet. He immediately began to organize "a joint conference of Hindus and Mahomedans to consider the steps to be taken with a view to concerted action." The All India Congress Committee was also bound to pronounce its judgment on the out-standing questions. So uncertain and so complex was the situation, and so divided the counsels that Gandhi was not quite sure that the Congress would accept his programme of Non-Co-operation. As a preliminary to securing the support of the Congress, and while the fate of Turkey was still hanging in the balance, he took, what was for a non-party man like himself, the momentous step of joining the All India Home Rule League and accepting its Presidentship (April 1920). In a circular letter to the members of the League he says:—

"It is a distinct departure from the even tenor of my life for me to belong to an organization that is purely and frankly political. I freely confess that reforms take a secondary place in my scheme of national organization. The causes (I want to advance as a preparation to Home Rule) are Swadeshi, Hindu-Muslim Unity with special reference to Khilafat, the acceptance of Hindustani as *linguafranka* and a linguistic re-distribution of the provinces. (As regards methods), I believe that it is possible to introduce truth and honesty in the political life of the country and while I would not expect the League to follow me in my Civil Disobedience methods, I would strain every nerve to make truth and non-violence accepted in all our national activities."

Towards the close of May (1920), the All-India

Congress Committee met at Benares and decided to place the programme of Non-Co-operation for consideration before a special session of the Congress to be held in August (1920.) The joint Hindu-Muslim Conference of over three hundred influential representatives of both the Communities met at Allahabad on the 1st and 2nd of June. There were several reasoned and some angry speeches. In view of the decision of the All-India Congress Committee to convene a special session of the Congress for the sole discussion of the Non-Co-operation programme, the joint conference dispersed without coming to any definite conclusion. The discussions in the conference, however, served to clear the air and enable Gandhi to estimate the forces arrayed for or against his programme. He was not the man to be daunted by opposition, however influential it might be. His mind was made up. He could no longer conscientiously co-operate with the Government. He could no longer wait till the Congress pronounced its decision. Under his guidance the Khilafat Committee passed the Non-Co-operation resolution. It was decided to give one month's notice to the Viceroy and then to start the movement. The die was thus cast.

In a solemn speech which was listened to in perfect silence Gandhi said:—

“I know full well that the Moslems realize that Non-Co-operation is the only weapon now left to India. I wholeheartedly sympathize with them and am prepared to co-operate with them to get the Peace terms revised. I am of opinion that the present is a warfare between false Christianity and Islam. On the one side is strength of arms; and on the

other, moral force. I want to win the war with moral force."

For having thus attempted to force the pace of the Congress and the country, Gandhi has been severely criticized. Now, apart from the conscientious grounds on which he can certainly take his stand, his course can be defended on strategic grounds, also. Every great agitation in India has been first started before and without the express sanction of the Congress; has accomplished a considerable amount of success and only then it has been blessed by the Congress; and in a sense this is as it should be. It is not wise to stake the prestige and popularity of the Congress on foolhardy adventures.

Throughout all these months of suspense and trial, the Moslem mind again and again reverted to the question; "What is Tilak's attitude"? "Will he support Non-Co-operation"? People who remembered what a tremendous success the Tilak-Besant alliance was, wanted now a Tilak-Gandhi alliance to lead the Non-Co-operation movement. "Will Mr. Tilak join the movement?" There was no question of "will". Every movement aimed at paralyzing the Bureaucracy had the instant support of the Lokamanya. With regard to the Khilafat, the Lokamanya said "My idea is that the Mahomedans themselves should take the initiative in the matter. After full discussion, they must come to a definite decision and it is for the Hindus to support them in whatever decision they would arrive at." After this unequivocal declaration, it is ridiculous to doubt the attitude of the Lokamanya. But the Hand of Death snatched him away at a time when his

inspiration and guidance were most necessary and the sorrow-stricken nation was deprived of the advantage of the much longed-for Tilak Gandhi alliance.

When the Congress met at Calcutta Sept. 4th the issue was still uncertain. The attitude of the many leaders who were more or less sceptical about the success of the new movement made even the ardent Non-Co-operator tremble with diffidence. Many of the Nationalist leaders had been even till the day of the Congress unable to make up their mind one way or the other. Mr. B. Chakrabarty, Chairman of the Reception Committee, confessed, that speaking for himself he was not clear in his mind with regard to the details of Non-Co-operation. The redoubtable Lala frankly declared that so far as the Boycott of Councils was concerned his head was with the Nationalists while his heart went entirely to the Non-Co-operators. But whatever the hesitation, doubt or fears of the leaders, the vast mass of delegates that had hailed to Calcutta from all the parts of this great continent were in no mood to trifle. The entry of Mrs. Besant into the pavillion was marked by dead silence—indicative of the fate that awaited her efforts to fight Non-Co-operation; and when the Chairman of the Reception Committee referred to Non-Co-operation, the whole assembly demonstrated its immense enthusiasm by vociferous cheering which compelled the speaker to stop for full five minutes. Whatever the leaders might think, the Congress was solidly for Non-Co-operation.

The Resolution of resolutions was of course the Non-Co-operation one ; and on this there was such tempestuous divergence of opinion that private interviews,

informal meetings and discussions failed to clarify the issues. The essentially idealistic nature of Gandhi's Non-Co-operation Programme the immense sacrifices it called upon the classes and the masses to undergo, called forth at once the enthusiasm of the audience, and apprehensions in the minds of sober Nationalists regarding the adequate response which it would evoke. But at this critical moment in the nation's history these sober Nationalists were unable to suggest an adequate substitute and their position in this respect was no better than that of Dr. Sapru who at the Joint Conference was asked to give his alternative for Non-Co-operation and who is said to have confessed that he had none to offer. While opposing Gandhi's proposition, Srij. Das appealed to the audience not to be swayed by personalities—for in that case Gandhi's was the greatest living personality in India—but to listen to logic and argument. But the very amendment which Mr. Pal moved and Mr. Das seconded was of such a halting nature that the result was not long in doubt; for shorn of its trappings, what did the amendment mean? It merely sought to postpone the Non-Co-operation fight by the dilatory devices of (1) a Deputation to the Premier, (2) the appointment of a representative Committee to discuss and suggest modifications, alterations and additions in and to Gandhi's programme and the (3) recommendation for the carrying on of an educative propaganda throughout the country before the programme was actually put into practice. Now Gandhi and others had already been educating the public for a number of months; the days of deputations were presumably gone and the suggestion

for the appointment of a representative Committee to consider Non-Co-operation was not very creditable to the leaders, as this all-absorbing question was already before the public for several months.

If therefore, the mover and the supporters of the amendment got considerable support, it was simply due to their preparedness to enter the new councils. On this point there appears to have been a majority in the Congress but owing to the unskilful tactics of the Councilwallas, they were defeated. Gandhi had taken the wind out of their sails by tagging the Boycott of foreign goods to his resolution; he had also made concession to our weakness by prefixing the word 'gradual' to the boycott of titles, schools, colleges and lawcourts; and having made these compromises, he stood firm as a rock on the question of Council-entry. Many of the supporters of Mr. Pal's amendment admitted after the Congress was over that, had a separate poll been demanded and taken on the Council-entry question, they would have commanded a majority; having failed to do this at the right moment, it is no wonder that they suffered a defeat.

And this is the more lamentable because in spite of all that has been said to the contrary, the issue was not "whether Swaraj has to be gained through the Councils or without the Councils", but how to paralyze the Government and bend it before the will of a united nation; and the wisest course seemed to a lay mind to keep as many strings to the bow as possible. Those, who in supporting the Boycott of Councils argued that otherwise the energies of the nation would be divided, admitted by implication that our resources were very

limited; and this admission was not very creditable to those who thought that 'Swaraj' could be won in one year. To say that the Councils would not have been of use in creating a tense and electric atmosphere in the country was really to confess want of skill and of the knowledge of strategy; and to hold that the Councils were utterly useless was to go back on the statements made at the time of, before and after the Amritsar Congress. The Reforms had delegated large powers to the Councils. The Councils were a snare only when the people's representatives were in a minority. With a clear majority powerful to obstruct and construct, the entry of the Non-Co-operators into the Council-Halls would have, if anything, lent added strength to the mighty battle going on in the country.

From the idealistic standpoint of Gandhi, the Boycott of Councils was perfectly logical. We cannot seemingly co-operate and then non-co-operate. In such a pure and sublime idealism, strategy has no place.

Lokamanya Tilak, however, was nothing if not strategic. Had he been living, he would, while accepting the *whole* and not merely the *first step* of Non-Co-operation programme, have remained quite uncompromising on the question of Councils. He knew perfectly well how principles once accepted have a tendency to develop to their fullest extent. The acceptance of the principles of Non-Co-operation meant, sooner or later the acceptance of the whole programme. He therefore would have deemed best to anticipate the people's verdict and go in for the whole programme at once. Strategist that he was, he knew how the progress of Non-Co-operation would have favoured the work in the Councils.

and how the work in the Councils would have favoured the progress of Non-co-operation.

At the Congress, Gandhi scored, as he deserved, a signal victory. It was a treat to witness this saint in the Subjects Committee, perfectly peaceful and unruffled, coaxing, arguing, all in that low, earnest voice of his, while others were yelling, threatening and abusing one another. If there was one man above others who did not lose his temper throughout all those stormy scenes, it was he. While others were seeking to outwit each other, he alone was thinking aloud. Whenever he rose to speak, he followed more frequently the trend of his own thoughts, than the course of the preceding discussion; and if he cared to refer to what other said, that was only to illustrate and emphasize his view-point; and in all that he spoke, there was not one angry word, a single retort or uncharitable phrase that would hurt his opponents.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SAINT IN POLITICS

Most religious men I have met with, are politicians in disguise, I, who wear the garb of a politician am at heart a religious man.

M. K. Gandhi

That such a precious treasure of power should be put into the mean and frail vessel of our politics allowing it to sail across endless waves of angry recrimination is terribly unfortunate for our country. The external waste of our resources of life is great owing to external circumstances but that the waste of our spiritual resources should be allowed to happen on adventures that are wrong from the point of view of moral truth is heart-breaking. It is criminal to turn moral force into a blind force.

Rabindranath Tagore

OF all the critics of Non-co-operation, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore is at once most sympathetic and most ruthless. People had expected that the Poet of Asia would limit his activities to his noble sphere and deliver his message undistracted by the angry recriminations of Indian politics. But for once, the poet chose to lay aside his lyre and unburden himself in an article which for its literary flavour and moral fervour must be pronounced to be simply unique. But in spite of

the handsome tribute which Tagore pays to Gandhi we must say that he is hardly fair either to the movement or to its great leader. The poet is anxious to restore the harmony of the world; he is impatient of the narrowing influences of Nationalism; he seeks to win for India an honoured throne among the civilised nations. He wants our culture to ennoble humanity; India's spirituality must soothe the world's pain. When however, the question of 'how' comes, the poet's vision melts into nothingness and we rise from the perusal of the article, poetically refreshed but intellectually unconvinced. The cosmopolitanism of the poet is no more politically sound than was the now-exploded theory of Free Trade. Protection must precede Free Trade; nationalism must precede humanitarianism. Neither the poetical conquests of Tagore, nor the spiritual victories of Vivekanand, nor yet the scientific achievements of Bose, have, all combined, brought India one hundredth of that recognition, which Japan's organized and militant Nationalism has won for her. It is poetlike to talk of the 'waste of moral forces'. And pray, how is Gandhi's 'adventure wrong from the point of view of moral truth?' If we revere Gandhi for anything it is for his moral intrepidity which has heartened him to harness the forces of anger and violence. It is the noblest enterprise a spiritual mind can undertake. We have watched with rapt attention the poetical fountain of Tagore beautifully at work. We are all glad and proud of the feat. But for the satisfaction of our pressing needs, we must turn to the rushing torrent of Gandhi's message, fertilising, though some times inundating the fields. The greatest waste that can occur

to spirituality is through a spirit of complacent conservation. To use spirituality even on, what Tagore calls 'wrong adventure' is to develop it; and and it is the mission of Gandhi's life to develop his spirituality by leading such adventures.

For the first time perhaps in modern history an essentially religious mind has deliberately chosen to work out its salvation through the muddy path of politics; and therefore, apart from the interest which the career of a great personality or the vicissitudes of a noble cause naturally evokes, Gandhi's leadership of the Satyagraha or N-C-O. movement has an added significance in that it enables us to see how a saint steers his vessel through the stormy sea of politics. Politics, as ordinarily understood, is a game of chance, of shrewdness, of diplomacy. Politics means compromise. In politics, little heed is paid to the means, so the end is reached. At best it is a vulgar game, from which several highly refined natures have recoiled. But the politics of a subject nation has always an element of spirituality which naturally attracts such minds and that is why men like Ranade, Tilak and Arabindo Ghose were drawn, perhaps even against their wishes into the vortex of politics.

Of all such men Gandhi is from this standpoint the most remarkable. The Lokamanya's career was a unique combination of spirituality and worldly wisdom. The political career of Srj. Arabindo Ghose hardly occupied four years. It is only in Gandhi therefore that we can see the workings of an essentially spiritual mind with anything like completeness.

We have already seen how, when the whole of India

was astir and aglow with Home Rule activities Gandhi carried away by his chivalrous regard for the difficulties of John Bull, was comparatively silent though fully sympathetic. His confession of Himalayan miscalculation at the end of his anti-Rowlatt Act agitation, his astounding and chivalrous support to the Indemnity Bill, his unbargaining attitude towards Islam in distress, his insistence at Amritsar on the passing of a Resolution condemning the frenzied violence of mobs in April 1919, his deification of conscience even over Shastric injunctions on the one hand and Congress mandates on the other, his utter horror of violence and his extreme views of non-violence, his "relentless pursuit" of Truth—all these have revealed to India an essentially original mind; and have often, brought him odium and unpopularity. They have sometimes enabled his opponents to steal advantage over him. They have perplexed friend and foe alike and many have impatiently pronounced him to be quite an enigma, a mysterious unbalanced, capricious leader, well-meaning of course, but unsafe to rely upon.

This occasional disappointment of the masses in their chosen leader only proves what a wide gulf exists between Gandhi and the populace, and also, for the matter of that, between him and most of his comrades and lieutenants. He is not only too great to correctly understand the mob-mind but too good to realize the evil forces that have established a firm hold over the world, and too conscientious to utilize opportunities, not in themselves questionable. But though his supreme faith in the Good that inheres in man makes him sanguine and at times incautious in dealings

with his opponents, that same faith is also responsible for much of that magical awakening he has successfully brought about. If in the Gandhi-Reading interview and the consequent 'apology' of the Ali Brothers, Gandhi's saintliness is shown to disadvantage, we must not forget that only an other-worldly-minded man could have talked of sedition as virtue and dared pronounce Boycott even on the Prince of Wales. Though however at times the path of sainthood is not the path of statesmanship, though very often the tenderness of his heart and the utter holiness of nature make him shrink from accepting situations, logically and politically unassailable and from which more worldly natures could have extracted greater political benefit, still on the whole it is safe to conclude, from a sympathetic and at the same time critical examination of the workings of his mobile and elastic mind, that the path of sainthood is very often the path of strategy. The proud manifesto which Gandhi hurled at a prematurely triumphant Bureaucracy subsequent to the arrest of the Ali Brothers was nothing but the out-pouring of an essentially chivalrous nature, which, with a unique love and tenderness, not often to be met with even in domestic spheres, had identified the persons of the Ali brothers with Islam and Khilafat; but though it was his personal love and loyalty to the Ali brothers that prompted him to issue the historic manifesto, still for all practical purposes, it served the interests of strategy. His innumerable admissions of mistakes would have irreparably damned an ordinary politician; instead, they have added to the prestige of his name. None but a reformer of the religious type could have introduced the question

of untouchability into the region of politics. How often has it served the strategic purpose of acting as a brake over the shallow enthusiasm for Civil Disobedience?

We shall arrive at a more confident and correct interpretation of Gandhi's actions if we always keep at the back of our mind the one cardinal thought that in all that he says and does he is actuated by the highest spiritual motives, irrespective of the fact that what he does from the ethereal heights of saintliness very often but not always serves the purposes of political expediency. Then only the several occasions we had of being mortified at his "whimsical" or "capricious" leadership, will cease to confound us; for we shall know that even when he disappoints us, or when he is not successful, he is uniformly consistent. Then we shall cease to indulge in the meaningless prattle that we could always understand Lokamanya Tilak but we cannot properly understand Mahatma Gandhi! Who knows, in his days too, Mr. Tilak for ought we know might have been an equally knotty riddle to others!

In several respects, it will have to be admitted that Gandhi come nearer to Lokamanya than to any other Indian politician not excluding Gokhale himself. Gandhi's views on caste and on the Hindu religion and civilisation are more in unison with Tilak's than with those of prominent Moderate leaders. Indeed if the fundamental difference between the early Moderates and the early Nationalists is to be sought anywhere, it must rather be in the difference in their cultural view-point. This divergence in outlook made the Moderate, a votary of the Western Civilisation and

consequently almost a fanatical upholder of the British Connection. Like Gandhi and unlike Gokhale, Tilak was an uncompromising opponent of the Western civilisation. His methods of political warfare also resembled more those of Gandhi than those of Gokhale. Gokhale admitted indeed the legitimacy of Direct Action. But to his pessimistic vision the right moment never came; and it was here that he parted company with Tilak whose politics, like that of Gandhi, was essentially self-reliant, courageous and self-sacrificing. It was these features of Tilak's activities that roused at once the apprehensions of the Moderates and the enthusiasm of the masses. As against these virile qualities of Tilak which in inept quarters were called intemperance, fanaticism and worse, the Moderates advocated the exercise of what they considered to be statesmanship and diplomacy but which all India now knows to be nothing better than opportunism pure and simple. Time and again, Mr. Tilak has exposed the hollowness and futility of this statesmanship and diplomacy in his incisive and convincing manner.

"But then, what are we to make of the oft-repeated declaration of the Lokamanya at and after the Amritsar Congress that "diplomacy must be met with diplomacy?" The meaning is clear. The Moderates had for one generation relied upon persuasion, diplomacy and strategy. These had confused and misled the infant Indian democracy. Tilak therefore had insisted on plain-speaking, and resolute action. The effect was wide-spread awakening. People began to think boldly speak boldly and act boldly. There was however a touch of heedlessness, even recklessness, in their

dealings. They relied too much on their own power of suffering. They refused to take advantage of the breaches in the opponents' walls. They placed all their cards on the table. They refused to look to any tactical advantage. They relied for the consummation of their ambition on maximum sacrifice. This, as we all know, is Gandhi's method. It was partly Tilak's method. But since the passing of the Government of India Act (1919), Tilak thought there was simpler way. Sacrifice there must be, but it need not be maximum. The millennium of self-perfection is not at hand. With a lofty goal and clean methods, let us he said, march on, taking by all means every advantage of the enemy's weakness. No general will expose all his manoeuvres to the enemy before the moment of attack. No leader may place all his cards on the table. The time for introducing diplomatic and strategic considerations in the National movement has now (1919) come. It is in this sense that Tilak's methods are not Gandhi's. Gandhi is unconsciously, also not uniformly diplomatic and strategic. Tilak as much believed in self-suffering as in inflicting righteous suffering on the opponent: to put it better still Tilak wanted his countrymen to suffer only in proportion to the suffering they could inflict upon the opponent. Gandhi believes only in drawing suffering on ourselves. Gandhi appeals to the inherent but dormant goodness of his opponent. He wants to awaken it by self-suffering. Tilak appealed to the material considerations that generally dominate men and institutions. To Tilak suffering is a means to a political end; to Gandhi suffering is a secondary goal by itself. That is why Tilak and Gandhi could never

agree on the Boycott of British goods; and though in this sense to say 'Tilak's methods are not my (Gandhi's) methods' is unexceptionable we must supplement the statement by saying that Gandhi's methods are not only different from Tilak's but also from those of every other Indian leader not excepting Gokhale himself; and that though the saintly methods of Gandhi are certainly loftier, still for the acceleration of Swaraj, Tilak's methods appear to be better adapted.

The difference between Lokamanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi can well be illustrated by the difference between the prevailing tone of the *Kesari* and that of *Young India*. The late Lokamanya was nothing if not combative and hence the vein of the *Kesari* was essentially controversial. His writings were highly intellectual, severely logical, profound, learned, no doubt but it is the warrior's steel which shines through every word. Gandhi's contributions to the *Young India* may be likened to the discourses of a prophet surrounded by a knot of expectant disciples and if reference is occasionally made to controversies, it is merely to enunciate and emphasize his own view-point.

In the world of journalism the *Young India* and the *Navajivan* occupy a unique place. It is indeed, refreshing to come across a paper which places truth, purity and cleanliness above considerations of policy and circulation. To Gandhi the *Young India* and the *Navajivan* are a vehicle of his message and not a source of income and profit. He would, if he could, have distributed them gratis. But as that is impossible he would charge merely for paper and ink. He never cares to allure readers by advertisements, commercial

news, sensationnal stories and such other means. The *Young India* is not for such. It seeks to afford no recreation to the tired brain, no pastime to the intellectual dilettante. It is meant only for the devoted. It offords no soothing moral doses, no intellectual morphia, but is on the contrary calculated to create a kind of spiritual unrest in the mind of the reader. Gandhi's editorship of the *Young India* now and then reminds one of the editorship of Sri. Arambindo Ghose of the immortal *Bande Mataram*. There is the same transparent sincerity, burning faith, inextinguishable fervour, the same lofty idealism sustained by an ethereal elevation of outlook. The momentum of his thought occasionally took Arambindo to the regions of philosophy. Gandhi's calm, practical sense, however always keeps him rigorously to his subject. While Arambindo could when he chose be stern towards his critics and opponents, there is a weird feeling of tenderness with which Gandhi approaches them. Nothing pains him more than to be required to criticise them; he is never so happy as when he can praise them. He does not so much excel in reply. He is at his best when he enunciates his proposition. His style is simplicity and beauty incarnate. His short crisp sentences of concentrated thought and sublime emotion remind again and again of the Bible. Sometimes the very simplicity of his sentences is apt to mislead one into the belief that the thought too must be equally simple, but very often, he succeeds in conveying the deepest thought in terse, telling sentences. The exposition is always direct, running straight to the point, turning neither to the right nor to the left; and the whole

calculated to awaken not anger but love; thought-provoking, refreshing like the morning dew; here and there suggestive of the infinite, like the blue sky.

Gandhi's leadership of the Non-co-operation movement shows the same idealistic tendencies that are revealed by his editorship of the *Young India*. Friendly critics of the N-C-O. programme opine that it is rigid and inelastic; they point out that it puts a premium on the sacrificing spirit of the people, that it presupposed the existence of an intensely outraged sentiment in the totality of India's population, that it called upon those to suffer hardest who were not prepared by preliminary training and discipline to do so. Many have found fault with the programme because, instead of evolving with the progress of events it was already cut and dried in advance and for all time. Some have opined that N-C-O. could be successful if only the course of previous political organization would have enabled the leaders to put into operation all the items of the programme at once; for then only dead-locks could have been created and the Government would have been paralyzed. All these critics fail to take note of the one cardinal feature of N-C-O. at once its strength and weakness, *viz.*, that it rests on one moral idea, the refusal to participate in a wanton wrong perpetrated by the powers that be. No amount of prudence, of cold calculation, of diplomacy, had any place in this protest. Non-co-operation is a grand moral doctrine. There is nothing negative about it except its name. It seeks to avoid all points of contact with the Bureaucracy; schools, colleges, law-courts, service, army, taxation—in whichever matter we have

normally to join hands with the Bureaucracy, we must stand resolutely apart. The programme was therefore bound to be rigid, bound to be cut-and dried. It could not be put into operation all at once because the country was not sufficiently organized for the purpose. But the unpreparedness of the nation was no ground for the indefinite postponement of the moral duty. A rising nation has always to attempt things beyond its normal strength and acquire the necessary strength in the act of wrestling even at the risk of defeat, and whatever the rigidity of the programme that was more than compensated for by the mental elasticity of the leader, who succeeded in keeping intensely pre-occupied the popular mind for more than twenty months, who awakened the masses as they never had been awakened before, who evoked as a spirit of sacrifice unparalleled in the annals of the country, who ingrained his lofty idealism in the generality of the public, who broadened the base of the movement by opening the door for the *pariah*, who encouraged sturdy independence and fearless outspokenness in the workers, who sought to find out economic salvation for the poor and who laid the foundation of a vast industrial revolution by the popularisation of the spinning wheel.

Considering the actual work done, as distinguished from the enthusiasm awakened in connection with the educational section of the N-C-O, resolution, it must be admitted that considering the circumstances, it has been quite creditable. The establishment of four or five national Universities, of nearly a score colleges and a hundred high schools, is no mean achievement. When however we remember that the leaders were

hopelessly divided on the propriety of emptying schools and colleges, when we remember that the President of the Special Congress declared himself to be against such a step, we can understand the perplexity and confusion into which the students were thrown by the call of Gandhi. If there was any one section of the Indian population which could have generously responded to the Nation's call, it was the students. They have not the burden of growing families to support. They are young, they are idealistic. Their freshness, courage and readiness to sacrifice would surely have enabled them to 'empty schools and colleges.' But a combination of circumstances rendered their enthusiasm somewhat barren of results. As has been just observed, the leaders were hopelessly divided on the question. Some challenged the propriety of the step others sought to draw a line between school-going and college-going students. Then there was the question of what the non-co-operating students were to do, after their withdrawal from colleges. Gandhi recommended to them the spinning wheel, others advised them to carry on an intensive village propaganda; some thought of establishing National schools and colleges. A few would allow them even to roam about idle in the streets. The appeal was made to the students at a time when the N-C-O. movement had not yet emerged from the stage of uncertainty. Had the appeal been made to them about the middle of 1921, or had the Tilak Swaraj Fund been collected one year earlier, the response of the student-world would have been miraculous. As soon as the Calcutta Congress was over, Gandhi issued his appeal to the students of Gujarat. Mr. Mahomed

All led the attack against the Aligarh University. But as the majority of the trustees were old-fashioned and reactionary, he had to content himself with a new National College at Aligarh with about 150 students to start with. At Benares the success was even less impressive. In the meanwhile, the Gujarat University and Tilak Vidyapitha were established at Ahmabad and Poona respectively. A notable attempt to nationalize education was made by a band of competent and enthusiastic graduates at Amalner; almost every one of these attempts proved unsuccessful. The chief difficulty of starting national schools and colleges is money; but even with money and a decent beginning it is difficult to keep them alive if the initial enthusiasm is not sustained by vigorous work and the institutions not further re-inforced by fresh contingent of students. Unfortunately every one was in a hurry and even the thousands of Calcutta students who in a moment of enthusiasm left Colleges had ultimately to return to them.

At the parting of ways, a victorious majority has always to face the danger of split. After the Calcutta Congress, there was no danger of defection; the defeated Nationalists were too patriotic to desert the Congress. But even after, in obedience to the "mandate" of the Congress, some of the leading Nationalists had withdrawn their candidature for the Legislative Councils; there was no knowing how far they would be prepared to loyally carry out the programme sketched out by the Congress. An attempt was made and feelers thrown by some Independents to have 'a conference of all persons opposed to N-C-O to discuss the situation'

with the special object of exploring the possibility of finding "capable candidates for Councils" Presumably it failed, but the sense of exasperation and wounded pride was still there. The pleaders' class, which had rendered yeoman service to the national cause, during more than a generation, suddenly found itself banned from its rightful place in the politics of the country. It appeared as if the active exponents of the new movement would be called upon to face apathy, inertia and a feeling of resentful sullenness in the majority of the leading workers.

Undaunted by these dangers and fears, Gandhi continued his ceaseless activities. "Expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath" that he is, he would not still give up principles to conciliate personalities. When, in view of the changed circumstance in the country, he sought to alter the creed of the All India Home Rule League of which he was President, many well-meaning advisers requested him not to add to the complexity of the situation by unnecessarily alienating several of the leading members of the League. "If we can continue our N.C.O activities in spite of the obsolete creed of the League, where is the wisdom of raising fresh issues and inviting further controversy?" Thus spoke the voice of prudence. Such illogical prudence Gandhi cares not a rap for. If the time has come to definitely fix our ideal and revise our methods, it is sheer sophistry, he thought, to stick to the old grooves of expression. The first attempt in the direction was made at Calcutta (September 1920) and the seal of finality was given at Bombay (3rd October) at a general meeting of the League. There was no opposition when

the All India Home Rule League was re-named as "Swaraj Sabha." But when Art. I commencing with "The object of the Swaraj Sabha is to secure complete Swaraj for India according to the wishes of the people of India" came for discussion, several of the members headed by Mr. Jinnah, demurred. The chief objection of Mr. Jinnah was that the new constitution omitted the mention of British connection and that it was permissive of "unconstitutional and illegal activities." In reply Gandhi said:—

"I want my country to have Swaraj with or without the British connection. I am not opposed to that connection by itself but I do not wish to make a fetish of it. (By clause 3) we have limited our ambition in order that we may carry the Congress with us and be thus enabled to remain affiliated to that body. As regards the words "unconstitutional" and "illegal" they are highly technical terms. An ex-Advocate General of Madras considers N-C-O to be unconstitutional; I think (Mr. Jinnah) considers it to be perfectly constitutional. The President of the Special Congress gave it his considered ruling that my resolution was not unconstitutional. It is difficult for me to conceive an illustration under the British constitution, of unconstitutional activity except violence; and violence has been specifically eschewed from the Sabha's constitution. Similarly about the word "illegal," jurists have differed in its interpretation. It is a most dangerous thing for a country, fighting for its very life, its honour and its religion to tie itself down in a knot of indefinable expressions. I personally hate unconstitutionality and illegalities, but I refuse to

make a fetish of these as I refuse to make a fetish of the British connection."

Not approving of this change in the constitution of the Sabha, Messrs. Jinnah, Jayakar, Jammadas Mehta, Jammadas Dwarakadas, Hansraj P. Thakarsey, Gulabchand Devchand and several others tendered resignation of their membership of the Sabha.

But the matter was not going to end here. The same intrepidity which emboldened Gandhi to broach this question when the N-C-O resolution was only partially accepted by the Congress emboldened him also to put it before the Congress even when he was anxiously pressing for the acceptance of the whole N-C-O programme. Mr. Jinnah in opposing it made a powerful speech and declared that, it was neither logically nor politically sound nor wise to place before the Indian National Congress, the object of the "attainment of Swaraj by all legitimate and peaceful means". In Mr. Jinnah's opinion, it was the height of imprudence to make a declaration which we have not the means to carry out. He made bold to say that India would never get independence without bloodshed; and as the country obviously had neither the will nor the capacity to resort to violence, a declaration for unadulterated Swaraj was a hasty step. Mr. Jinnah was unable to agree with the suggestion that the creed was made deliberately elastic so as to include not only those who advocated British connection but also those who wanted to destroy it. This he considered mere camouflage. "Is it possible" he asked "for us to stand on the same platform after this creed is passed, one saying that he wants to keep the British connection and another that

he does not want it?" He wound up his arguments by an impassioned appeal to Gandhi to cry halt. But neither his reasoning nor his appeal had the slightest effect on the vast number of delegates and the new creed was accepted with literally a handful of dissentients in an assembly of 18,000.

Far more important was the N-C-O resolution. The question of altering the creed of the Congress to suit the changed conditions in the country was at best academic. Even the *Times of India* asked "Of what avail was it to preserve the old constitutions when the Congress itself was committed to a line of action at complete variance with the old creed" and added that "when the majority of the Congress decided to embark on the policy of N-C-O it destroyed the old Congress ideal far more surely than was done at Nagpur by a mere alteration of words." N-C-O thus was the principle issue. The signal success that had attended the activities of Non-co-operators in boycotting the Councils, together with the immense enthusiasm aroused by and in Gandhi's incessant tours throughout the country rendered possible a substantial victory for the whole-hoggers at Nagpur.

The President of the Congress differed on several important points from Gandhi and in his long and learned address mildly criticised some of the features of the Calcutta Resolution. He proposed instead "to starve the English by National strikes on the Railways and in the Telegraph Departments, the withdrawal of labour from factories and the stoppage of exports." This doctrine of "economic anarchy"—as the *Times of India* cynically called it, has much to recommend itself,

but it was not calculated to enlist the support of Gandhi who would not incur the remotest suspicion of using ignorant and illiterate labour as pawn in the game of Politics.

But whatever the attitude of the President, whatever the apprehensions of a small but highly patriotic and singularly level-headed class of Congressmen headed by Mr. Jinnah, the 18,000 odd delegates had already made up their mind in the matter. They were not prepared to allow any moderation in the pace of the Congress and emphatically demanded the brakes deliberately put at Calcutta to be removed. In this they could rely on Gandhi who wanted the N-C-O resolution to be "comprehensive, definite and effective." The Calcutta resolution was only the thin end of the wedge. It enunciated the principal of N-C-O commenced sketching a programme and abruptly stopped in the middle. It had on the face of it, the appearance of incompleteness and incoherence. The beauty of the renunciation of titles could only be appreciated when read along with the sections of non payment of taxes. The boycott of schools and colleges was a distant link in the boycott of Government service. In the Calcutta resolution, the N-C-O doctrine did not appear in its proper and complete perspective. Gandhi resolved to give it a finishing touch at Nagpur and succeeded in enlisting full support for the whole of his programme, of those very Non-co-operators who had opposed its first step at Calcutta. Considerable pressure was brought to bear upon him regarding the withdrawal of Boycott of Courts and the ban on practising pleaders. Here Gandhi was inexorable and the N-C-O resolution

reaffirming the Calcutta resolution declared that the Congress was not satisfied with the way in which the Nation's call had been responded to by the lawyers and that greater effort must therefore be made. As regards the Boycott of educational institutions, Gandhi readily accepted the reasonableness of those who advocated that while "there was no power on earth that can prevent a boy under 16 from acting in accordance with his conscience" it was not the business of the Congress, but the special prerogative of the guardian, to try to quicken his conscience by direct appeals to him.

The most curious feature of the Calcutta Resolution was that while the lawyer was specially asked to sacrifice his means of livelihood for the honour of the country, it left entirely untouched the fat merchant busily plying his import trade. The Nagpur Resolution however exhorted all pleaders, doctors, traders agriculturists, merchants—everybody in the country to do his bit. Brahmins and Non-Brahmins were called upon to show greater mutual toleration as N-C-O with Government necessarily involved greater and fuller co-operation among the people themselves. Even the untouchables were not neglected; and for the first time in the history of the Congress, serious and strenuous efforts were required to be made to remove the bar of untouchability. When the Congress sought the love and co-operation even of the "lowest of the lowly," need we wonder that the soldier and the Policeman were not forgotten? Referring to this part of the Resolution, Gandhi said—

"I think it is right we should know that we are not tampering with obligations of services imposed,

on employees of Government, whether civil, military or police. But we are asking them not to kill their conscience. I want to make the point clear. I know the discipline of soldiery and I say, if a soldier receives the commands of his officer which he considers to be in conflict with his religion or duty to his country, he may certainly disregard them at the peril of his life."

But greater, more memorable than even the triumph of Gandhi's programme at Nagpur, was the triumph of his personality. At Calcutta the message of Non-co-operation "was delivered in the midst of strife, doubt and disunion. It was now re-delivered in the midst of joy, acclamation and practically perfect unanimity. The Nagpur Congress ratified, clarified and amplified the first declaration." If the "dissensions that had grinded the public life" since the Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta, were by now a thing of the past, the credit is as much due to the suavity of Gandhi's nature as to the reasonableness and sense of responsibility of those who had then opposed him and who now became his staunchest colleagues. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that no other leader would have been able to accomplish such a wonderful feat.

CHAPTER XIV

EBB AND FLOW—I

मुहूर्ते ज्वलितं श्रेयो न च धूमायितं विरम् ॥

महाभारत

ONE of the saddest achievements of Non-Co-operation has been the stopping of the News-paper *India* and the abolition of the British Congress Committee. In justifying his attitude Gandhi said:—

“The paper (*India*) costs much more than it is worth. Its influence on English opinion is practically nothing and it is an indifferent vehicle of English opinion for India's enlightenment. Now that we have embarked on non-co-operation and are determined to become self-reliant it would be more consistent for us to disestablish the British Committee and stop *India*. I would far concentrate all our attention and all our best workers on India. The harvest is rich and the labourers are few. We can ill spare a single worker for foreign work.”

If, indeed, it is impossible to spare a single first class leader for work outside, the matter admits of no further argument. But a nation determined to attain Swaraj within the quickest time possible must produce quite a harvest of first-class men and women. A few lakhs of

rupees and half a dozen men are nothing to a nation on the high-road to Swaraj. Economy must not defeat its own end. Foreign propaganda must come to be regarded as a part, an integral part of our work in India. Indians must not forget that even in the supreme pre-occupations of the Great War, England, France and Germany, in fact every belligerent sent hundreds of men and women abroad to win for themselves the sympathies of foreign nations. When asked why he, a Non-co-operator should have waited on Lord Reading, Gandhi is reported to have said that the world was anxious to know what ails India and as the Viceroy represented a big world, it was his duty to meet him; a slight extension of this argument would admirably sum up the position of those who advocate foreign propaganda. Gandhi is right when he depends most on the inherent faith and strength of Non-co-operators. Had our Satyagraha spirit been of the purest kind, this argument would, from his standpoint have been unassailable; but as he has repeatedly admitted the impurities and imperfections that have been mixed up with that spirit, we have to make concession to our weaknesses for this identical reason, not only did he not oppose when in South Africa, the idea of a Deputation to England in 1909 but actually led it himself. It would have been extremely desirable had he not at any rate abolished the British Congress Committee and stopped *India*, which seemed to be doing good work for this country in England.

"If Gandhi is anxious not to divert our energies from their destined goal by sanctioning Council-entry and foreign propaganda' how does he tolerate the same

by allowing his followers to work in the Municipalities of Ahmedabad, Nadiad or Surat?" Some have tried to answer this objection by urging that "the Councils are citadels of Bureaucratic power and that the Boycott of Councils was intended to shake off the moral prestige of the Government; as the Government has consolidated its moral power and prestige through Courts, Schools, Colleges and Councils, the national boycott should be confined only to these; and that since Municipalities and Local Boards are practically self-governing popular bodies, very little connected with the Bureaucratic moral power over the country, non-co-operators are entitled to use them for their object of reaching, educating and organizing the public." But this is at best mere quibbling. Those who consider that Gandhi, in spite of the apparent inconsistency, had approved of the Non-co-operators working in the Municipalities of Ahmedabad, Nadiad and Surat because he considered these as possible centres for offering Civil Disobedience at some future day are possibly nearer the truth. At any rate, the participation of Non-co-operators in these Municipalities has considerably helped the movement and hence stands fully justified "In theory, Non-co-operation means mere 'sulking'. But 'sulking' by itself would not take the country to *Swaraj* unless it is made dynamic by a constant effort to seek the points where the impregnable fortress of the Bureaucracy can be effectively attacked."

It was from this standpoint that the campaign against liquor proved a welcome addition to the Non-co-operation propaganda. Every great national upheaval in India has been attended by a crusade against

drink. Here the position of the Government is most delicate: Interested though the officials may be in maintaining the 17 crores of Abkari revenue, it goes against sentiment and considerably damages the reputation of the Government to seriously oppose the pickets who watch the liquor shops and persuade their countrymen not to indulge in drink. From the Non-co-operators' standpoint the movement is at once a movement of self purification and a movement calculated to paralyze the Government. In the Bombay Presidency in particular, it achieved remarkable success and but for the Dharwar tragedy and other reasons on which we need not dwell the ground gained would not by now have been appreciably lost.

From the very first, Gandhi has been insistent on the perfect observation of non-violence. But such are the imperfections of human nature and such the forces of mischief working in (and against) every great agitation that his repeated appeals have not been quite successful. The Malegaon tragedy is a remarkable instance of what a combination of surcharged atmosphere, mistaken zeal and official bungling, are capable of. Sir Sankaran Nair in his "Gandhi and Anarchy" has laid nearly a hundred riots and disturbances to Gandhi's door; this is of course a glaring perversion. Violence no doubt there has been; and in a very few cases violence where the non-co-operators were directly or indirectly involved. Unfortunately in spite of our best endeavours we have been able neither to ignore it nor to stop it; and the result is that the whole future of the movement is now imperilled.

The outlook of the country, however, was far

brighter in March 1921 than it was in March 1926. When the All India Congress Committee met (21st March 1921) at Bezwada, the sterner, more impatient and less experienced patriots in the Committee wanted the immediate passing of a resolution recommending Civil Disobedience. With the growing awakening of the masses, it was absolutely necessary for the people to respond to the policy of repression by the inauguration of Civil Disobedience. But, as was proved by the events of the preceeding few months, Gandhi found that the country was not yet sufficiently awakened, prepared or organized to come to grips with the Government. He pointed out to the restive spirits of the Committee that "Civil Disobedience as such was not in express terms recommended by the Nagpur Congress and was not within the four corners of the resolution of Non-co-operation". This fact, however, he thought, would not prevent the All India Congress Committee from only expressing its opinion in the form of advice, in order that the country might have a lead from the Committee. Civil Disobedience at the stage was premature. Besides, he wanted to give the recently appointed Viceroy full time to study the situation and device proper measures. With this double object in view, he recommended to the notice of the Committee a "non-aggressive" programme—the collection of one crore of rupees, the enrolment of one crore of members to the Congress organisations and the proper distribution in the country of 20 lakhs of spinning wheels. He called on the votaries of Civil Disobedience to prove and test their readiness by successfully carrying out the programme which would moreover organize them for the

Boycott of foreign cloth on which Gandhi had set his heart. In proposing the resolution for adoption, Gandhi said:—

“In respect of those aspects of our propaganda upon which we have so far concentrated, there is no need for further concentration. Whatever be the number of students who had given up colleges or of lawyers who had given up practice; the Congress had demolished the prestige of these institutions of the bureaucratic government of the country. The Congress may therefore well trust to time for the movement to work its way fully, Now, in order to achieve the programme of Swaraj, we should concentrate upon those parts of it which would directly lead the masses to its realisation.”

Important as it was, the Gandhi-Reading interview was, in a sense, a small, almost a trifling episode in the onward march of Non-co-operation in 1921. “Was it proper for India’s chosen leader and the author of Non-co-operation to seek an interview with the official head of the Bureaucratic Government”? That was the question which Gandhi was asked by his countrymen. The mass mind is accustomed to insist more on the letter than on the spirit of any important principle and ignore the fact that in great movements, such bookish logic is not the safest guide. The capital Lord Reading made out of the apparent fact that it was Gandhi who *Solicited* the interview and the Viceroy who *granted* it conclusively proves that His Excellency was prouder of his diplomatic achievements at Washington than of his judicial career in England. That the whole thing was a mistake, Gandhi has freely admitted. It was however a mistake which does great credit to his

heart in that it reveals his lingering faith in the statesmanship of England.

It was at the instance of Pandit Malaviya that Gandhi visited Simla. He was informed that the Viceroy was anxious to meet him. He applied for an interview. The Viceroy graciously granted it. From the 13th to the 18th (May 1921) the whole of India was expectantly waiting for some welcome announcement. Anglo-India was perturbed at the thought that the Viceroy would be carried off his feet by the sweet and persuasive eloquence of Gandhi. In all there were six interviews and it appeared there would be no end of them. If the Anglo-Indians were frightened by the frequency and duration of the interviews, Indians too were not entirely without misgivings of their own and many a friend solemnly warned Gandhi and advised him not to yield on vital points.

Except for their novelty and sensation, the interviews had no significance and if they are even at this date remembered, that is principally due to the famous apology of the Ali Brothers, which can directly be traced to them. That apology was certainly a diplomatic triumph for Lord Reading, though it is doubtful whether a Jurist and a statesman of Lord Reading's reputation should be proud of such purile triumphs. His Excellency the Viceroy certainly caught the great Non-cooperation leader napping. There was, of course, no bargaining on Gandhi's part and the Government communique issued on the subject even expressly admits "Mr. Gandhi even said that whether the prosecution takes place or not, he would be bound, after having seen the extracts to advice his friends for their own

honour and that of the cause, to express publicly their regret." "But the close sequence of points raised in the interviews as reported in the Government Communique lends colour to the thought that had Gandhi wanted to bargain he would not have done it in any different manner. The Government communique is wonderfully and cunningly self-effacing in tone and the idea of Gandhi's mental uneasiness during the conversation about the Ali Brothers is very remotely but very clearly suggested." The cleverness of the Government was worthy of a better cause.

But this tactical triumph of Lord Reading neither added to his prestige nor took away that of Gandhi and of the Ali Brothers. We, who know Gandhi, instinctively know that bargaining is not his nature. Even admitting for the sake of argument that Gandhi did as a matter of fact seek to avoid the arrests of the Ali Brothers by promising an early publication of their apology, what does the thing prove? Nothing but this unlimited solicitude for them and for the Hindu-Muslim unity; as also his over-anxiety to avoid bloodshed; motives certainly creditable to him as the Government Communique admitted: "During the whole discussion His Excellency and Mr. Gandhi were actuated by the desire to prevent any untoward event that might result from the prosecutions." As regards the Ali Brothers, their bravery was beyond cavil and unfortunate as the publication of the apology was, every one readily thought that it was purely out of deference for Gandhi, that they consented to issue their statement.

But there was one set of critics who made it their

business to jeer at the brothers. This was the generality of Anglo-Indian newspapers and in this campaign of merry-making they had the active help and support of several Moderate newspapers, who seized this opportunity of performing the double feat of condemning the Ali Brothers for their apology and justifying the more inexcusable apology (1897) of Gokhale. It was the taunts of these opponents and their persistently repeated imputations of cowardice that made a deep cut into the brave hearts of the Ali Brothers and were mainly responsible for their unruly conduct in the Karachi Courts and the wording of the famous Karachi resolutions.

Another attempt to discredit the Ali Brothers was in connection with the statement said to be made by Mr. Mahomed Ali that, in case, the Amir of Afghanistan invaded India, he would help the Amir. Even after Mr. Mahomed Ali had categorically repudiated the statement, an academical discussion on the subject was kept up by interested people and seemed to have a special fascination for the *Leader* and the *Pioneer*. This was evidently an attempt "to drive a wedge between Mr. Mahomed Ali and Mr. Gandhi and the Congress creed Hindu Moslem Unity." These critics also wanted to extract somehow from the Non-co-operators and especially from Gandhi an admission that if the Afghans invaded India, non-co-operators shall have to co-operate with the "Satanic" government. The evident anxiety with which the question was seriously discussed even by thinking and knowing persons like Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal showed the utter helplessness to which Indians have been reduced. The anxiety and uneasiness.

provoked the amusement of Gandhi who succinctly described his position as follow:—

(I) I do not believe that the Afghans want to invade India.

(II) I believe that the Government is fully prepared to meet an Afghan invasion.

(VI) I hold it to be contrary to the faith of a Non-co-operator to render unconditional assistance to a Government which he seeks to end or mend.

(VIII) I would rather see India perish at the hands of the Afghans than purchase freedom from Afghan invasion at the cost of her honour.

(X) It is the duty of every Non-co-operator to let the Afghans know that India does not want their armed intervention.

Gandhi assured Mr. Pal who seems to have been very much perturbed at the idea of the Afghan invasion, that in case the Amir invaded India and in case Non-co-operating India does not assist the Government, the Government itself will have commonsense and resourcefulness enough to make terms with the people.

While Lord Reading was chuckling over his diplomatic triumph, Gandhi was ceaselessly working to make Bezwada programme an entire success. As every one felt, the success of the programme would be a test of the vitality of the movement and even its critics admitted that the collection of a crore of rupees—which was the most important part of the programme—would atone for the failure of the movement to get an adequate response from title-holders, students and lawyers. By the 30th of June the required crore was collected, the city of Bombay coming to the rescue and

contributing about one-third of the amount and thus making up for the poverty, lethargy, or want of organisation in backward provinces. In announcing the collection Gandhi wrote:—

“The subscription is but a mile stone on the journey. The crore cannot give us Swaraj, nor the richness of the whole world can give it. Before we can be wholly free, we must be economically independent. A man who is forced to starve, cannot be expected to pray to God. A starving man will sell his soul. He has no soul to keep. Before, therefore, India can think of freedom, she must feel economically independent. And this she cannot do, so long as she is almost wholly dependent upon the foreign market for her cloth. One who owes his oxygen to the pump is a dying man. Is it any wonder that India is in a dying condition? If then we want to achieve Swaraj during this year, we cannot do so till we have brought about by self-renunciation, a complete boycott foreign cloth.”

The boycott of foreign cloth did not form part of the Non-co-operation programme as originally sketched out. But it is an intergral part of the *Swadesh Dharma* which co-operation or non-co-operation, every Indian is bound to follow. It is really curious that the two most successful planks in the Non-co-operation programme—crusade against drink and crusade against foreign cloth—have no logical place therein. But they were calculated to foster an aggressive spirit, engender sacrifice, give training in public work, develop a power of organisation and prepare the country for Civil Disobedience; as such their accession to the Non-co-operation programme was of immense use.

July, August and September (1921) were to be devoted to the "concentration of the nation's attention upon attaining complete boycott of foreign cloth." On the 1st day of August 1921, a day sacred to the memory of Lokamanya Tilak "Bombay the Beautiful" lit a fire that must remain for ever alive even as in a Parsi temple and which must continually burn all our pollutions." "We must give up" Gandhi said "the use of foreign cloth once for all. We must realize that foreign cloth in our possession is valueless even as richest milk (if it is discovered to be infected) is fit only to be thrown away. If we only realized the magnitude of the injury done by the East India Company (we shall perceive that) cloth which revives such black memories is fit only to be destroyed. It certainly cannot be given to the poor. We should have much greater regard for their feelings and their national culture than to think that we serve them by giving them what to use is a mark of slavery."

Gandhi's bonfire of foreign cloth evoked severe criticism even from his intimate friends. Some began to consider that Gandhi was rapidly becoming fanatical. In reply, we can only point out that this 'fanaticism' was no sudden development or passing whim. As early as 1919, Gandhi wrote:—

"It is not enough that we manage if necessary with as little clothing as possible. For a full observance of Swadeshi, it is further necessary to destroy all foreign clothing in our possession. If we are satisfied that we are in making use of foreign cloth, that we have done an immense injury to India, that we have all but

destroyed the race of weavers, cloth stained with such sin is only fit to be destroyed.

It was at the Bombay meeting (28th July) of the All-India Congress Committee, that the resolution of the boycott of foreign cloth was passed. On the occasion of this meeting also, Gandhi was repeatedly urged to start a campaign of Civil Disobedience. "Not having really tried it, every one appeared to be enamoured of it from a mistaken belief in it as a sovereign remedy for the present day ills," Gandhi pointed out to these impatient patriots that "Civil Disobedience can be (fruitful if we can produce the necessary atmosphere for it. It can only be tried in a calm atmosphere & if we can bring about a successful boycott of foreign cloth, we have produced an atmosphere that would enable us to inaugurate Civil Disobedience on a scale that no Government can resist." So Civil Disobedience was for a time postponed in order "to retain on the part of the nation an atmosphere free from ferment necessary for the proper and swift persecution of Swadeshi."

But even without Gandhi's knowledge, the ground for courting imprisonment and "inaugurating Civil Disobedience on a scale which no Government can resist" was already prepared at the Karachi Khilafat Conference under the presidency of Maulana Mahomed Ali where the now historic resolutions regarding army and independence were passed. Gandhi's attention was at once categorically drawn to these and he "had no hesitation in giving the assurance that no stone will be left unturned (by him) to prevent a departure even by a hair's breadth from the policy of non-violent non-co..

operation that has been deliberately adopted by the country." "Long before the Congress meets," he added "if India proves true to herself, I look forward not to Declaration of Independence but to an honourable settlement that will satisfy the just demands of India. The army resolution particularly frightened the Bombay Government. They had been watching with evident uneasiness the success of the boycott of foreign cloth. Feeling that the moment for striking a decisive blow had come, they decided with the concurrence of the Government of India to arrest the Ali Brothers. As regards the possibility of the outbreak of violence, they probably had no fears as they knew that Gandhi would try his best to see that peace was maintained. Accordingly the Ali Brothers were arrested (14th September 1921). The Rubicon, was at long last, crossed.

When Gandhi had fixed 30th of September for the completion of the Boycott of foreign cloth and the inauguration of a campaign of Civil Disobedience, the action of the Government afforded the nation a very welcome *cause belle* quite a fortnight earlier. Gandhi has made many passionate speeches, but it is doubtful whether any one of them can equal, in intensity of feeling, the powerful speech he made (19th Sept.) at Trichinopoly on the arrests of the Ali Brothers. The speech proves how deeply he was stirred and what a unique love and regard he had for the brothers.

"I am sorry" he said "I was not present at that historic Conference in Karachi and had I been present there I should also have been one of those who supported that resolution x x x I know that it is sin for a

single Indian to serve either in the British army or in any of the Civil Departments and if a public declaration of this character even in the presence of soldiers constitutes the offence of tampering with the loyalty of soldiers, let me tell the meeting and through it the Government of India that I have committed the offence of tampering with the soldiers, times without number. It was an offence committed by the Indian National Congress at Calcutta and deliberately repeated at Nagpur. What I venture to warn the Government is that as soon as the country has received and assimilated the gospel of the spinning wheel and Swaraj and as soon as the soldiers and others are ready to take up the spinning wheel and the handloom, I promise that I shall undertake to go to every one of the soldiers and every one of those who are serving the Civil Departments of Government to give up their employment and take up the spinning wheel."

Hundreds of meeting were held all over India where resolutions identical with the Army Resolution at Karachi were passed and thus open challenges were thrown to the Government; and thousands of Indians stood waiting to be sent to goals. The leaders met at Bombay and issued in their individual capacity over nearly fifty signatures a manifesto declaring that "it is the inherent right of every one to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety of citizens offering their services to or remaining in the employ of, the Government whether in the civil and military department." The challenges were not accepted and the Government thought it wise not to take any notice of the Manifesto.

While the boycott movement was at its zenith, the sudden news of the Moplah outbreak (Aug. 20) sent a wave of horror, pain, indignation all over the country. The real causes of this episode are as obscure to-day as they were twenty months back. It appears that agrarian discontent coupled with official partiality for the rich land-lords together with the inevitable repression created a most acute situation in which the arrest of three Moplah divines and the surrounding of a mosque by the military acted as the explosive spark. From the very first, it was clear that the bureaucrats wanted to exploit the situation fate had brought on and by fanning the Hindu passions against the monstrous atrocities perpetrated by the Moplahs, aimed first at destroying once and for ever the much-talked-of Hindu-Muslim Unity and then crushing the Non-co-operation movement. It ill became those who blamed Gandhi for declaring that he would not co-operate with the Government even in case of Afghan invasion, to maintain inimical feelings towards the Non-co-operators and decline their proffered help for the restoration of order and amity in Malabar. Whether party feuds may be kept up or forgotten on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales may perhaps be an open question. But cases like the Khulna Famine, Bengal floods and Malabar disorders require co-operation between all contending parties, Government included. But as Gandhi said that "the Moplah revolt has come as a blessing to a crumbling system of administration" and the "Government were desirous of showing once more that it is only the British soldier who can maintain peace in India,"

The Moplah rising was the greatest disaster, the Non-co-operation movement had to face in 1920 and 1921. Even at this distance of time, Hindu blood boils in the veins at the barbaric deeds of cruelty, lust and frenzy perpetrated by the Moplah fanatics. Gandhi had but to utter one word of anger, make one gesture of reproach and the country would have resounded with a fury that would have torn the Hindu Muslim Unity at one snap. But no! that word was never uttered, that gesture was never made. More important than even the wails of the Malabar Hindus (from the national view-point) was the permanence of the Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhi's mind has been considered to be "unbalanced" by some Moderates and Anglo-Indians. Yes, it is unbalanced but the balance always is in favour of magnanimity and chivalry. He would never speak of the Moplah without a word of praise for his bravery. He would never write on the Moplah rising without paying a tribute to their religious zeal, however misguided and fanatical it might have been. Many of us were angry with him for laying greater stress on their bravery than on our sufferings. How often the words of the great leader jarred upon our ears. "What was more detestable, the ignorant fanaticism of the Moplah brother or the cowardliness of the Hindu brother who helplessly muttered the Islamic formula or allowed his tuft of hair to be cut or his vest to be removed?" "Is this all the sympathy" we muttered "the Hindus get from their great leader"? But however mortified, however dissatisfied; we knew at heart that Gandhi was in the right; and while his heart bled at the cruel sufferings

inflicted on his co-religionists, his tongue would only utter words of sympathy and even admiration for the wrong-doers! And this great sacrifice of sentiment made by him had its reward; for when the time came, Hindus and Muslims in spite of the Moplah rising continued to stand shoulder to shoulder and at the call of the leaders, twenty five thousand volunteers joyfully marched to gaols without once considering whether they were Hindus or Mahomedans!

The arrest, trial and conviction (November 1st) of the Ali Brothers and their friends gave the movement for Civil Disobedience the required fillip and on November 4th, the All-India Congress Committee met at Delhi to finally decide upon the question. There was perfect unanimity regarding the necessity of immediately starting the campaign; and the opposition came solely from the fire-eaters who wanted no brakes and preliminary conditions. "The All-India Congress Committee authorised every Province on its own responsibility to undertake Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes." Those who sought to start Civil Disobedience were however encumbered with various conditions. They must know hand-spinning. They must believe in Hindu-Muslim Unity. They must discourage untouchability. Such conditions were galling to those who at once wanted to march ahead. But whatever may be justly said against the imposition of these conditions, they served as very good guarantees against premature precipitation of the movement. Though provincial autonomy was given, still Gandhi appealed to all to wait and see how he himself would lead the movement in Gujarat before they commenced

theirs. Maulana Hasrat Mohani very properly pointed out that Civil Disobedience to be successful must be simultaneously started in various centers; otherwise Government could easily concentrate their repression in one place. But he could not convince Gandhi on the point. In moving the resolution Gandhi said:—

“During the last ten months India had made tremendous head-way. If we are simply to gauge the quantity of progress, there is every reason to feel proud of it, but if I am asked to say whether it is sufficient for the removal of the triple disease we are suffering from, then I have to confess that it falls far short of the requirements. Hence the necessity of repetition and emphasis of all vital items of the programme of Non-co-operation, particularly those mentioned in the resolution. We are prepared to give no quarter to the Government and should expect none. The bigger the injustice and hardships we are put to, the greater the patience and unflinching determination we observe, the sooner would Swaraj come. Civil Disobedience is a civil revolt, which when practised would mean an end of Government authority and an open defiance of its laws. It is a gigantic step and although provincial autonomy is being granted to provincial organisations, I would advise you all to wait before lurching on it and see what I shall try to do in Gujarat.”

Man proposes and God disposes. The campaign of Civil Disobedience was, as intended started no doubt, but it was started after it had received an unexpected check and in a manner totally unforeseen by anybody.

CHAPTER XV

EBB AND FLOW—II

I may be arrested, thousands who take part in the peaceful revolt may also be arrested, imprisoned or even tortured. The rest of India must not lose its head. It is the sacrifice of the innocent we want to make; that alone will appear pleasing to God.

N. K. Gandhi.

IN the history of great revolutions, violent or non-violent, it is remarkable what a great part is played by the blindness and obstinacy of Governments. Indeed, it may even be said that the affairs of nations would not have reached the stage of revolutions had the rulers been far-sighted, liberal-minded and wise; but in spite of the precious wisdom bequeathed to us by history the fatal facility of making mistakes seems to characterize all Governments. If there was any occasion when the meanest intellect would never have committed a mistake, it was the occasion of deciding whether H. R. H. the Prince of Wales should visit India. 'It is easy to be wise after the event, but in this case nearly very one was wise before it also.' The poor reception given by the Indian Nation to H. R. H. the Duke of Connaught would have convinced even a casual observer of the dangers of repeating the

experiment. When, even through the limited opportunities he had of feeling the pulse of the nation, the good-natured Duke did not fail to notice "the shadow of Amritsar lengthened over the fair face of India," Lord Reading ought to have considered fifty times before reviving the talk of bringing the amiable Prince of Wales to this country, especially when after the inauguration of the 'Reformed' Councils, there was no ostensible reason for so doing. But his imperialistic pride would give him no rest until even "against the advice of his Provincial Governors" he could force a distracted nation to participate in the pleasures of the future ruler of the British Common-wealth; and because fewer students had left colleges and fewer pleaders had suspended their practice than might have been expected, Lord Reading chose to consider the N.C.O movement as already declining. He therefore sought to follow up this negative victory by the Prince's triumphant march all over the country. He did not realize "that now is not the time for a solemn and delicate ceremonial, that the existence of the tie between England and India should not be emphasized at the moment it is under revision, that the ancient troubles and complicated sorrows of a continent cannot be soothed by sending a pleasant young man about the railway trains, all handshakes and jollity and proclaiming in his graver moments that he is 'anxious to learn.'" Had Lord Reading been gifted with the imagination of his distinguished race, he would have at least commemorated the Prince's visit by some signal act of statesmanship. As the New Republic observed. "The Prince was either a vessel of reconciliation or an agent of provocation."

Not choosing to make him a vessel of reconciliation Lord Reading wonderfully succeeded in making his "royal progress a trail of blood.

On November 17th, His Royal Highness landed at Bombay and was given a fitting reception at the pier by many Europeans, Eurasians and Parsis and a few Hindu and Muslim magnates of the city. But the heart of the city had gathered at the other end to participate in the big bonfire of foreign cloth where Gandhi was to be the principal speaker. While most of the citizens of Bombay were engaged in these celebrations, there should have been no untoward happening. But in this mortal world, there is a hidden power which always works against human calculations. While Gandhi in his simplicity was congratulating Bombay citizens on their non-violence "in the face of grave provocations," the mill-hands who were specially directed not to strike work left their mills in criminal disobedience of the orders of their masters. "A swelling mob" began to molest peaceful passengers in the tram-cars and hold up the tram-traffic. "As the day went up, the fury of the mob, now intoxicated with success rose also. They burnt tram-cars and a motor-car smashed liquor shops and burnt them too."

All that followed is but too well-known. For five long days the city of Bombay lost its head and indulged in reckless bloodshed. Reprisals led to reprisals and there was no knowing how things would end. The Government did not lose its head. The tone of some of its usual supporters also was eminently sane; and the Times of India gracefully admitted that "with these active manifestations of turbulence, the official N-C-O

party has nothing to do." But the conduct of several Government officials was not uniformly commendable and Gandhi was forced to notice that "the police and the military took sides during the recent trouble." This statement provoked a rejoinder from the Government, which as usual took to itself the sole credit for the restoration of peace. But the restoration of peace was possible not because the Government had kept the military ready to shoot on occasions of emergency but because hundreds of Bombay citizens—co-operators and non-co-operators alike—pacified the fury of mobs, even at grave risk to their own lives. As a penance, Gandhi observed a complete fast during all these stormy days. Months of incessant work had exhausted his fragile body and the additional exhaustion of this long fast brought on fever and deepest anxiety was felt about his health; nevertheless he persisted in the determination to place his life as an offering to the Goddess of Peace. It was Gandhi's followers, who anxious to restore their master to health and life frantically went round the city on the errand of peace and goodwill and evolved order out of chaos and carnage. But the Times of India was in no mood to praise its opponents. In a rhetorical outburst, it remarked: "When Mr. Gandhi and his friends set out to pacify the mob they have all the air of penitent incendiaries who having started the conflagration, pour a bucket of water on the smouldering embers after the fire-brigade have extinguished the flames and rescued the surviving inmates. But the air of penitence is now being discarded and the chief incendiary is accusing the fire-brigade of opposing his purpose." The Times of India seems to forget that

but for Gandhi's presence in Bombay, the spectacle of an insignificant minority in the city succeeding in inflicting heavier casualties upon Hindus and Moslems would never have been witnessed.

The attitude of Gandhi throughout the eventful days of the Bombay riots must have dispelled whatever shadow of suspicion lingered in the minds of sceptics regarding his sincerity in preaching the gospel of non-violence. So thoroughly rooted is the faith of humanity in violence, that both in official as well as non-official circles people have persistently refused to believe Gandhi's profession of non-violence as anything but hypocritical. But those who saw him weep, fast, lament, reproach and pray during the week of the Bombay riots were utterly convinced of the supreme sincerity of the man.

With the occurrence of the Bombay riots, Gandhi's hopes of an immediate inauguration of the campaign of Civil Disobedience were indefinitely deferred. "The Swaraj that he had seen" during the riots had "stunk in his nostrils" and to escape from the "organized violence" of the Government, he was not prepared to encourage "unorganized violence" of the people. It was high time for a halt, for the retracing of steps and for a deep searching of the heart. But things were moving with tremendous velocity. Besides, the reckless conduct of Government officials left the country no choice but to court imprisonment. "The apparent 'provocation' to the Government came from the phenomenal success of the Hartal at Calcutta (Nov. 17) "Eye-witnesses, awed Englishmen, declared that the volunteer organization was perfect and displayed a calm

enthusiasm that was very impressive and an efficiency that could come only from careful preparation. The discovery that Indians could run a great city without European assistance filled the Calcutta merchants with dismay and they appealed to Lord Ronaldshay.' 'Immediate action against people who were bringing Government into disrepute' was demanded, and on Nov. 19th the Government of Bengal issued a communique declaring illegal several volunteer associations.

And now the battle commenced in right earnest. Hitherto the Bureaucracy was hesitating between an attitude of patience and a policy of repression. Once however repression was resorted to, it was necessary absolutely necessary for the Bureaucracy to deliver sledge-hammer blows and to restore at least a semblance of tranquility in the country by the time the Prince had come out of Rajputana. On Nov. 23rd, the province of Delhi was proclaimed under the Seditious Meetings Act. Volunteer associations were also declared unlawful. The Punjab and U. P. Government followed suit. It was expected that the simultaneous and unexpected campaign of repression would cow down the people. But the nation as a whole refused to be scared away by these ruthless measures. When the Prince reached Allahabad, he was "greeted by five miles of deserted streets." The challenge thrown out by the Government was accepted with grim determination by all the provinces where the volunteer associations were declared unlawful. Thus the tide turned and Gandhi was gladdened to find that the movement was rapidly gathering strength in spite of the temporary check it had received from the Bombay riots.

Lord Reading had hoped to give a knock-out blow to the N-C-O movement by a campaign of repression unparalleled in the annals of the country; but he quickly discovered his mistake. More than 20,000 young men together with many leading workers eagerly went to gaols. Not a sign of wavering, hesitation and demoralisation could be seen. The situation was evidently getting out of hand. One hundred thousand Indians, for aught he knew, would be courting imprisonment. Repression had not only not succeeded but had actually recoiled on its authors. It was necessary to resort to a change in tactics. The nation refused to be threatened into submission. It had now to be conciliated. So Lord Reading at once drew the trump-card which he had up in his sleeve and at once as if by magic the project of a Round Table Conference began to be generally discussed. A welcome opportunity to give vent to his thoughts was found by him in the Malaviya Deputation that waited upon him (21st Dec. 1921). But though Lord Reading was anxious to conciliate the country and enable the Prince to have a good time, he could not get over his ideas of semi-divine prestige; and though he expressed himself as being favourable to the holding of a Peace Conference, he wanted a definite gesture from Gandhi before he could commit himself to the proposal. "I do not know" said His Excellency "from the address presented to me what view is taken by the leaders who are responsible for N-C-O activities in the sense that I find no assurance from them that these activities will cease if a Conference were to be convened." Did Lord Reading seriously believe that Gandhi, after being once trapped

into applying for an interview would commit a similar mistake again.

Nor was this all. Lord Reading made it perfectly clear that though he was not averse to the holding of a R. T. Conference where "neither party should claim triumph" in his opinion there was practically nothing which the Conference had to consider. What then became of the triple demand of the Congress? Let the Viceroy speak:—

"Before I part from you I cannot refrain from making some brief observations on the statements in your address. You state that the Government has not yet done all that it should have done in relation to the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs. Ever since I have been here and frequently as a result of consultation with those of great influence who do not represent the Government, I have taken steps to meet the views presented to me in respect to the Punjab wrongs. I am perfectly aware of the desire on the part of many that more should be done. I could not accept these recommendations because I have thought that I could not conscientiously give effect to them.

With regard to the Khilafat, what action it is suggested the Government of India should take? We have done everything possible.

One further word upon the reforms. The Legislature have only begun to function this very year and the demand is for a more extended or complete Swaraj. The reforms are actually in operation; it cannot yet be said that they have been completely tested."

Let those who blame Gandhi for having put his maximum demands before the Malaviya Conference

ponder over this attitude of the Viceroy. If there was, nothing which the R. T. Conference had to consider, what was the good of convening it; Was all this talk merely a trick of getting out of the awkward situation created by the campaign of repression? The formulation by Gandhi of his maximum demands was a strategic move in answer to the Viceroy's statement that nothing further could be done with respect to the triple grievance of the Punjab, the Khilafat and Swaraj.

Had the Viceroy used conciliatory language, the proposal for a R. T. Conference would not have fallen through. But his threatening references to the N-C.O.'s attitude on this question together with the mental reservations about the release of all the political prisoners (including the Fatwa prisoners) were not calculated to foster confidence in the minds of the people about the *bona fides* of the Government. Besides the Government was principally anxious to avoid the much dreaded *Hartal*. Once it was observed, Government's active interest in the R. T. Conference ceased and later efforts made by Pandit Malaviya to bring about the much-talked of Conference were bound to be abortive. It should not be forgotten that the British Cabinet convened a similar Conference with Sinn Féin leaders only when all reprisals had dismally failed and had brought deserved odium on the Imperial Government. The bloody methods of Irish republicans need not be followed in India. But unless Indians demonstrate to the Government their absolute readiness to suffer any hardships for their country, unless the position of the Bureaucracy is made precarious by the magnitude of our heroism, all talk of a Round Table Conference is

futile and premature. There was nothing to prevent Lord Chelmsford from responding to Gandhi's request for such a Conference in the middle of 1920. But then N. C. O. was yet to be started and the Viceroy considered it to be the "most foolish of all foolish schemes." Lord Reading had on atmosphere of perfect peace in April 1921. The great N. C. O. leader had called off all aggressive activities and had voluntarily paved the way for an atmosphere of peace; but this gesture of Gandhi was misconstrued and was regarded as a weakness due to the failure of the early campaign of Non-co-operation. Considering all these circumstances, it seems perfectly clear that the proposal of a Round Table Conference can only find acceptance with Government when the situation is quite desperate in the country; and so, for the Government to ask the people to create an atmosphere of peace is tantamount to telling them to relax the vigour of that very agitation which opened their eyes and compelled them to ask for a truce.

The first definite proposal for a Round Table Conference in connection with the triple grievance of the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj originated with Gandhi, who while returning the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal had requested the Viceroy to convene without delay a Representative Conference of India's trusted leaders to avoid the impending catastrophe. It was insistently repeated by Commander Wedgewood who, impressed by the demonstrations at the Nagpur Congress called upon those responsible for the preservation of peace and order in India to seriously consider the situation. During the early months of 1921, the proposed

was so universally repeated, that it came to be implicitly believed that whatever else Lord Reading would or could do, he would lose no time in convening such a Conference. But it quickly appeared that His Excellency was not overanxious to call a Round Table Conference and was content to acquire knowledge India's outstanding grievances by the less pretentious method of private interviews with leading Indians. It was evident, howsoever well-meaning the new Viceroy might be, that the powers behind the throne considered it a great humiliation to confer on equal terms with India's chosen leaders. If therefore the prospects of such a Conference appeared a little brighter, the credit must undoubtedly be given to the remarkable bravery with which Non-co-operators answered the new campaign of repression. There was no knowing how the situation would develop and it was only in this moment of panic, that the talk of a Round Table Conference filled the air. Even then an inspired deputation had to wait upon His Excellency the Viceroy, and the organizers of that Deputation were made to appear as suppliants for a Round Table Conference. From the Olympian heights of his Viceroyalty, Lord Reading plainly told them that it was not the wish of the Deputa- tionists that mattered but the attitude of Gandhi and in the absence of an assurance from him, the request for such a Conference could not be entertained.

When the organizers of the Deputation found themselves in this unenviable situation by their failure to put feelers before such a Deputation was arranged, they ought to have at least made sure what cessation of hostilities the Viceroy demanded from Gandhi instead

of leaving the whole thing in the befogging phrase of 'a calm atmosphere'. And without arming themselves with practically plenary powers they approached Gandhi at Ahmedabad and began to press him to yield. Had it been a personal matter Gandhi would have acceded to their request. But he had no inclination to put the National Congress in the same awkward position into which the Deputationists found themselves before the Viceroy. He therefore resolutely refused to put any reference to such a Conference in the Congress Resolution. He was however not against a Round Table Conference. When the Congress met at Ahmedabad, there were two influences at work, one moderating and the other stimulating. The former was chiefly exerted by Pandit Malaviya, Mr. Jinnah and others who wanted that the Congress Resolutions should make some graceful reference to the Nation's willingness to take part in the proposed Round Table Conference. The chief force behind the impatient element in the Congress was the deep indignation at the arrest of thousands of national workers and it was echoed by Maulana Hasrat Mohani who wanted the Congress to change its creed and methods. Gandhi tried to hit the golden mean in the N.C.O Resolution which from this standpoint was admirably worked. The Resolution required all the normal Congress activities to be suspended as far as necessary and appealed to all to "offer themselves for arrest by belonging to the Volunteer organizations to be formed throughout the country." It was thus a proud challenge to the Bureaucracy and in the event of its acceptance by the Bureaucracy the Congress machinery itself stood in danger of being

declared illegal ; so perfect provision had to be made for the work to continue uninterrupted. " In view of the impending arrests of a large number of Congress workers, this Congress, while requiring the ordinary machinery to remain intact, hereby appoints Mahatma Gandhi as the sole executive authority of the Congress and invests him with full powers of the All-India Congress Committee and also with the power to appoint a successor in emergency." The resolution also advised Congress workers to organise individual Civil Disobedience and wait for mass-Disobedience until the masses had been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence.

In moving the resolution, Gandhi made an extremely powerful speech. Referring to the Viceroy and the proposal for a Round Table Conference, he said :—

" If the Government is sincerely anxious to do justice and nothing but justice (we want nothing more). I inform Lord Reading from this platform with God as my witness that he has an open door in this resolution if he means well but the door is closed in his face if he means ill. There is every chance for him to hold a R. T. Conference, but it must be a real Conference where only equals are to sit and there is not to be a single beggar. There is an open door and that door will always remain wide open, no matter how many people go to their graves, no matter what wild career this repression is to go through. This Resolution is not an arrogant challenge to anybody, but is a challenge to authority when it is enthroned [on arrogance. I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that you find in a stone, I do not want the peace that you find in a grave, but I do want the peace that

you find embedded in the human breast which is exposed to the arrows of a whole world but which is protected from all harm by the Almighty powers of the Almighty God."

If Gandhi showed no signs of relenting before the persuasive eloquence of Pandit Malaviya, he was equally inexorable in his opposition to the senseless cry of changing the Congress Creed. When Maulana Hasrat Mohani's Resolution declaring the object of the Congress to be "attainment of Swaraj or complete independence, free from all foreign control by all legitimate and peaceful means" was moved in open Congress, Gandhi made a strong speech which proved the genuineness of his willingness to remain as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. He said ;—

"Think fifty times before you take a step which may redound not to your credit, not to your advantage but which may cause irreparable injury. Let us first of all gather up our strength. Let us first of all, sound our own depth. Let us not go into waters whose depth we do not know. Our creeds are not such simple things like clothes which a man changes at will and puts on at will. They are creeds for which people die, for which people live for ages and ages. Our creed is an extensive creed. It takes in the weakest and the strongest. The limited creed of Maulana Hasrat Mohani does not admit the weakest of your brothers. Therefore I ask you in all confidence to reject this proposition."

Though the ultimate failure of the Malaviya Conference was a foregone conclusion, still it was proper to hold the Conference. But the minimum that was expected of the Conference was concerted action and unity in

demands. Had the Conference terminated its proceedings in harmony, Lord Reading would have been compelled to accept the terms of the compromise. But at this momentous hour in the destinies of the country, Pandit Malaviya, led—misled, we must now say—by the distinguished record of Sir Sankaran Nair requested him to accept the responsible office of "Speaker" to the conference. In doing so, Pandit Malaviya must have congratulated himself upon having secured the services of a man who was reported to be high in favour with Lord Reading and other Bureaucratic heads. The unreasonable attitude of Sir Sankaran Nair at the Conference together with his subsequent political pamphlet against Gandhi have not only disappointed his countrymen but have done incalculable injury to the great cause. The appointment as Speaker of a man who probably on account of the Malabar tragedies, was bitterly prejudiced against Gandhi and especially against the Ali Brothers, was not of good augury. The absence of Mrs. Besant and her lieutenants from the Conference was also significant. Nor was the attitude of the Anglo Indian Press—which had evidently taken its cue from the under-currents of the Bureaucratic mind—very encouraging. Still many prominent Moderates co-operated in the work of the Conference. Gandhi and several leading Non-co-operators were present. They had from the first made their position perfectly clear. While anxious to ensure the success of the Conference and help it in its deliberations, they wanted to keep inviolate the principles of their party. They wanted the Conference to act as a link, a bridge between the Bureaucracy and the Nation. They

were willing to come to terms but had not the least intention of appearing as suppliants for the terms. This time, at least Gandhi had no intention of affording another opportunity to Lord Reading to gain a tactical advantage. The speeches he made at the Conference showed that he was in no mood to be trifled with.

"We do want a round Table Conference" said Gandhi "if a Round Table Conference can be summoned with any prospect of success. Discharge the Fatwa prisoners, discharge the political prisoners against whom convictions exist or prosecutions are pending under the ordinary law or under the Criminal Law Amendment act and the Seditious Meetings Act. With reference to political prisoners convicted or under prosecution under the ordinary law I told you yesterday that it was the Committee to be appointed by this Conference which would decide whether all such prisoners could be covered by the recommendations of this Conference, but I was borne down by the logic of facts and the pressure of friends. Therefore I said if you want to appoint one nominee from yourselves and another from Government, with power to appoint an umpire, I shall accept the proposal. There is the question of activities of a general hostile character to be suspended, pending the R. T. Conference. I can only bring my self to accept a definite thing and therefore in order to enter into a compromise, we shall suspend even the liquorshop picketing during the time the Conference is going on. Provided those conditions which are to be fulfilled by Government are accepted by Government, we shall suspend Hartals, we can suspend picketing, and we shall suspend Civil Disobedience. No

other non-co-operation activity is to be suspended. I would not stop the enlistment of volunteers for a single moment, on the ground that it is a preparation for Civil Disobedience. The preparation will not be of an offensive character nor of a hostile character. This is in the interest of those who are now ready to embark on Civil Disobedience. They will have to embark on Civil Disobedience at a given moment so that they should keep the atmosphere of preparedness ready for them."

When in 1914, the negotiations about the Congress Compromise ended in nothing, the odium was thrown on the convenient head of Lok. Tilak. On this occasion the official Moderates and the Anglo-Indians, none of whom were eager to hold a R. T. Conference, have tried to fasten the responsibility of the failure of the R. T. Conference negotiations on Gandhi. And why? Because Gandhi insisted on the release not only of all Congress and Khilafat Volunteers but also "all others convicted under the ordinary provisions of the I. P. Code and C. P. Code." The attitude of the other side was this "Have the boys released, if you like but not the leaders—especially the Ali Brothers." Had Sir Sankaran Nair merely looked to the names of the Sinn Fein Representatives at the Downing Street Round Table Conference he would not have allowed his personal animosity against the Ali Brothers to get the better of him. His attitude towards the release of the Ali Brothers shows how we sometimes out-Government the Government. Had he, as speaker and Representative of the Malaviya Conference approached the Government and had the negotiations for the R. T. Conference threatened to break only on this question, one

could well have understood his opposition to the release of the Ali Brothers. But it is dangerous, unpatriotic to introduce personal dislikes and prejudices in the discussions of public questions. Was it not simply ridiculous to ask Gandhi to waive his condition about the release of the Ali Brothers, who along with him were the originators of the movement? As regards Gandhi's claims about the Punjab, the Khilafat and *Swaraj*, those who blame him for having put forward "impossible" demands forget the Viceregal remarks on these points. As we have already pointed out Gandhi's references to the triple demands were nothing more than a counterblast to the Viceroy's speech. One who condemns the former must condemn the latter. "Then there was Gandhi's refusal to stop enlisting the Volunteers," Here too, the objectors think with bureaucratic mind. Had the objectors any guarantee that the Government would not continue their preparations of crushing the movement? It seems, in view of the little-minded and craven objectors with whom Gandhi had to deal that it would have been better had he yielded on this trifling point and thereby put both his opponents and the Government doubly in the wrong. Besides even an unsuccessful R. T. Conference would have given the much-needed respite to the movement and made the moral position of the Non-co-operators simply unassailable.

But that was not to be. Neither the Government nor the official Moderates were in a conciliatory mood, and they wanted to see what this much-talked of Mass Civil Disobedience was like before they could express their willingness to effect a truce with the leaders of the nation.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT TRIAL

Non-Violence is the first article of my faith. It is the last article of my faith. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered has done an irreparable harm to my country or incur the risk of mad fury of my people bursting forth when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same.

M. K. Gandhi.

IN spite of the luring talk of a R. T. Conference Gandhi had not abated his preparations for mass Civil Disobedience at Bardoli. The 85,000 odd people of this small Taluka in the District of Surat had practically fulfilled to his satisfaction all the conditions laid down at Delhi. There were about Sixty National schools in the whole of the Taluka; untouchable children were admitted in every one of them and untouchable women were allowed to draw water from the common wells; the output of Khadi was fairly satisfactory. The Hindu-Muslim unity was perfect and in the presence of the apostle of non-violence, a peaceful

atmosphere was guaranteed. The fortnight's period allowed to the Secretaries of the Malaviya Conference for completing negotiations with the Government was drawing to a close. All India was looking to Bardoli with mingled admiration and envy. The Government was anxiously waiting for the moment of attack.

Before taking the irrevokable step of starting Civil Disobedience, Gandhi issued "ultimatum" to the Viceroy in which he appealed to Lord Reading even at that stage to stay the hand of repression, repair the wrong already done by releasing all political and under trial prisoners, and thus help Gandhi in establishing in the country, an atmosphere of peace. He did not even stipulate for the holding of a Round Table Conference. What he wanted "in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the forces of violence" was an atmosphere that would "allow the public opinion to ripen and enable the Congress to enforce greater discipline among the millions of its adherents." "The immediate task before us is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of the Press." The redressing of the triple wrong of the Punjab, the Khilafat and Swaraj was not the immediate issue. Civil Disobedience to redress this triple wrong had already been postponed on account of the Bombay riots. If now Bardoli had to give battle even in the absence of an atmosphere of peace, it was simply to defend the triple freedom that had been endangered by the policy of repression inaugurated by the Government. But if now the Viceroy guaranteed the preservation of the freedom of speech, the freedom of association and the freedom of the Press, then, in

the interests of non-violence, in the interests of that very 'law and order' which the Bureaucracy always swears by, Gandhi was prepared to wait.

But the Government was determined to try conclusions with the Non-co-operators. In their reply to Gandhi's manifesto, they "emphatically repudiated the statement that they had embarked on a policy of lawless repression." They declared that the demands put forward in the concluding paragraph of Gandhi's manifesto exceeded even the demands made by the Working Committee of the Congress. "The alternatives that now confront the people" they continued "are such as sophistry can no longer obscure or disguise. The issue is no longer between this or that programme of political advance, but between lawlessness with all its dangerous consequences on the one hand and on the other, the maintenance of those principles which limit the root of all civilised Government", and they concluded by declaring that the contemplated campaign of mass Civil Disobedience would be met with sternness and severity.

This was a challenge to the N. C. O. party to do its worst; and every consideration of principle and policy demanded that the challenge should be accepted. It was at this moment that news was received that at Chauri Chura (District Gorakhpur, U. P.) a mob of 3,000 including many Congress Volunteers had committed atrocities and burnt to death (Feb. 5) several police constables. What a deep impression, this tragedy produced on Gandhi's mind can be seen from the following outburst:—

"The tragedy of Chauri Chura thoroughly roused me.

when India claims to be non-violent and hopes to mount the throne of Liberty through non-violent means, mob-violence, even in answer to grave provocation is a bad augury. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps, re-arrange our programme and not think of starting mass Civil Disobdience until we are sure of peace being retained. Suspension of mass Civil Disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for further progress.

"But what about your manifesto to the Viceroy and your rejoinder to his reply?" spoke the Voice of Satan. It was the bitterest cup of humiliation to drink, surely it is cowardly to withdraw the next day after pompous threats to the Government.' Thus Satan's invitation was to deny Truth and therefore Religion, to deny God himself.

"Let the opponent glory in our humiliation or so-called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice and weakness than to be guilty of the denial of our oath and sin against God. It is million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves. The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound and the country will have gained by (our) humiliation and confession of error."

At a meeting of the Working Committee attended by some of the organizers of the Malaviya Conference, the situation was anxiously considered and after deep deliberation and prolonged consultations, it was decided to suspend Civil Disobedience and try to concentrate

the nation's attentions on what is known as the Constructive Programme.

Was the step proper? Has it done good to the country? How has it affected the situation in general? Only History can answer these questions. It is difficult for an ordinary person to consider the question from high *moral* and *religious* standpoints. *Strategically*, it has been considered to be a fatal mistake.—a mistake which has suddenly damped the enthusiasm of the whole nation. "Strike while iron is hot" is a sound and reliable political maxim. The massmind works at its best only in intense and electric atmosphere. The principle achievement of the Non-co-operation propaganda was, not the success of this item of the programme or that but the creation of a surcharged atmosphere. To the maintenance of that atmosphere perpetual postponements of the final issue would prove nothing but a "wet blanket". Even in armies the preservation of the *morale* of the soldiers is always a primary consideration. But the similitude of armies does not apply in national agitations. Every soldier of a regular army is out for death. He has no moods. His normal mood is to kill and be killed. Such a soldier has no reason to grumble at the commands of his general. But the 'irregulars' of a civil revolt can be heroic only in moments of exaltation. That is why the spontaneous acts of Non-co-operators—*Hartals*, picketing of liquorshops, courting of imprisonments on the issue of Volunteer organisations—have been far more successful than the premediated, cut-and-dried items of the programme. The only wise course after having once shown fight is to give fight. If we fight the

opponent is, no doubt, sure to fight with us; but we stand some change of victory. If we don't fight after having once challenged the opponent, the opponent again of sure of fighting with us; and here, **there** is only one fate awaiting us—a thorough rout. The path of recklessness is on such occasions also the path of wisdom.

Nor was the Constructive Programme of Bardoli—together with its slight modification at Delhi—very much calculated to hearten the workers. It was, as if Gandhi had successively placed in our hands, a pistol, a revolver, a machine-gun,—and finally a seventy-mile gun! And when we were about to use it and produce confusion in the enemy's ranks the seventy-mile gun has been suddenly withdrawn and a walking stick has been placed at our disposal!

And now the moment which Government was long-awaited at last came. Nothing shows the singular lack of statesmanship on the part of our well-meaning patriots more than the resolution moved in the Legislative Assembly by Mr. Schamnad recommending the early release of the Ali Brothers! What could be a more eloquent testimony to the mover's want of close touch with the feelings and plans of the Government than this unfortunate and premature resolution brought forward at a time when the Government of India was seriously contemplating the arrest of Gandhi? The only "good" this resolution did was to afford an opportunity to Sir William Vincent of pouring out the vials of his wrath on the devoted head of the Ali Brothers and calling them traitors to their country when he knew that they were powerless to deliver a crushing retort to the Hon'ble Home Member! This happened

on March 9th ; and on the following day " by order of the Government of Bombay and with the concurrence of the Government of India, Gandhi was arrested (10-30 P. M.) at his residence on a charge of sedition.

The story of Gandhi's arrest has thus been beautifully told by professor Benarasidas Chaturvedi :—

" As usual, we had our evening prayers together with the Mahatmaji. Then he told us about the rumour of his arrest. He said he was expecting it that very night. Then he went to his room where some people from the city had come to enquire whether there was any truth in the rumour of his arrest. Notable among these were Shrimati Anasuyabai and Srj. Shankarlal Bankers. Mahatmaji laughed when he heard of Anasuyabai's arrival and said smilingly "What brings you here at this hour ?" Mahatmaji then dictated answers to some of the letters with his usual calmness. Then he gave instructions to his assistants about the editions of *Young India* after his arrest. It was nearly ten o'clock and Mahatmaji said to all of us 'Now you must retire I shall go to bed.' Anasuyabai and Mr. Banker had not gone far from the *Ashsam* when they met the Superintendent of Police who informed Mr. Banker that he should consider himself under arrest. (The party) then returned to the *Ashram*. When Superintendent sent word to Mahatmaji through Anasuyabai saying that he could take as much time as he wanted. In the meanwhile the ladies and girls of the *Ashram* had all come to Gandhi's room. He had a word for each of them. Then he asked them sing the celebrated song of Gujarat's saint Narasimh Mehta, depicting the qualities of a *Vaishnava*."

The song over, he blessed all, took his seat in the motor-car kept ready for the purpose and was taken to Sabarmati gaol.

The wisdom or the necessity has been challenged of arresting Gandhi at a time when he had suspended Civil Disobedience activities for a very long time to come and had thrown in the whole weight of his influence on the side of moderation. The *Bengali*, the *New India*, the *statesman* and many other prominent Moderate or Anglo-Indian journals have severely criticised the Government for having arrested the Mahatma at a "psychologically wrong movement." Pro-Government persons and papers have affirmed that Gandhi had from the very beginning declared himself to be at war with the Government, had sent out a challenge to them, had practically inaugurated the campaign of Civil Disobedience and that it was now no longer safe to allow the peace and tranquility of India to be disturbed by a well-meaning but capricious fanatic." Sir Sankaran Nair has severely censured the Government for not having arrested Gandhi immediately after the Calcutta or at any rate after, the Nagpur Congress. He holds that their forbearance was quite culpable especially in view of the fact that Gandhi had repeatedly declared that he wanted to "take the credit or odium of suggesting that India had a right openly to tell the sepoy and every one who served the Government in any capacity whatsoever that he participated in the wrongs done by the Government." One may be pardoned for believing that the Government of India knew their duty far better than Sir Sankaran Nair. If the Government of India did not arrest Gandhi earlier, that was because

the first stages of the career of Non-co-operation, they had expected the movement to collapse without any interference from them and so they thought it superfluous for them to arrest Gandhi. When however the movement showed no longer any signs of a natural death, they rightly dreaded the results of such an arrest in the surcharged political atmosphere of the country. If the Government held their hand, it was not out of any love for Gandhi, nor on account of a magnanimous recognition of the spirit of democracy. The psychological moment at last came. The public had been dismayed and dumb-founded at the dramatic halt at Bardoli. There was a suppressed feeling of resentment in the rank and file, a temporary weakening of the immense influence of Gandhi over the country. The Mahomedans were supposed to have been placated and hence divided in sentiment from the Hindus by the personal sacrifice of Mr. Montague for Khilafat. Under these circumstances, the Government were perfectly logical from their standpoint, in pouncing upon Gandhi especially when they knew that there would be desertions, dissensions and mutual recriminations in the Non-co-operator's camp, after the unifying spirit of the great leader was withdrawn. The Government naturally held that it was only Gandhi who was still capable of retrieving the situation and of again infusing spirit into the hearts of his followers, and that in his absence, the movement was bound to dwindle. We do not blame the Government. But what shall we say of those Moderates who, in lending support to such a momentous step failed at the same time [to wring one concession from the Bureaucrats in exchange for such

a tremendous sacrifice? What can be more humiliating than the spectacle of every prominent Moderate leader and Association singing paeans of Mr. Montague while at the same time, he was culpably silent with respect to the arrest of his most illustrious countryman!

Let us, however, hurry back to the great trial. After the usual preliminaries, the case came up for hearing before Mr. R. S. Broomfield, Sessions Judge, Ahmedabad on March 18th at 12 noon and before the lapse of a hundred minutes everything was over and the judge had finished passing sentence on the accused. This speedy close of the trial was no doubt ensured by Gandhi's ready and unreserved admission of his 'guilt'. It was also ensured by the decision of the judge to convict Gandhi on his own plea without entering into elaborate details and arguments. From the standpoint of the judge, the only thing that remained to be considered was the question of sentence and on this point he wanted to know what Gandhi and the Advocate-General had to say. Here, too, the task of the judge was simplified. Both the lion and the lamb agreed that the sentence must be the very highest. Gandhi declared that he would invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that would be inflicted for what is in law a deliberate crime. The Advocate-General asked the learned judge to take into account the "occurrences in Bombay, Malabar and Chauri Chura, leading to rioting and murder." He admitted indeed, that "in these articles you find that non-violence is insisted upon as an item of the campaign and of the creed;" but added "of what value is it to insist on non-violence, if incessantly you preach

disaffection towards the Government and 'hold it up as a treacherous Government, and if you openly and deliberately seek to instigate others to overthrow it?' These were the circumstances which he asked the judge to take into account in passing sentence on the accused.

Mahatma Gandhi and Sir Thomas Strangman also agreed upon another point but on which the generality of Indians can hardly be expected to concur with them. The Advocate-General tried to fasten the responsibility of all the violence and bloodshed in India (since 1920) upon the author of the Non-co-operation movement. We know that the entire Anglo-Indian press and the majority to the Moderate organs have vied with one another in doing the same! Was the Mahatma responsible for all the deplorable deeds of disorder? If Gandhi is responsible for Malegaon, for Chauri Chura, for all the wicked deeds of infuriated mobs only because he was the accredited leader of the N. C. O movement is not the unrepentant and unreforming Bureaucracy equally responsible? Are not the authors of the Punjab atrocities and the Turkish treachery at least equal partners in the guilt? Is not the whole British administration in India from Lord Clive's acts of aggrandizement down to the latest act of Government repression—equally, if not more, and primarily responsible for every outrage done by Indians, individually or collectively? Surely, it is curious logic which allows the primary authors of a rotten administration to sit in judgment upon misdeeds perpetrated by men in moments of frenzy against their own better judgment and against the persistent advice of their leader!

Nor have we forgotten Gandhi's unreserved admission of his own responsibility. In a pathetic tone, he said in the Court,—

"I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurrences and the Chauri Chura occurrences. Thinking over these things deeply and sleeping over them night after night and examining my heart, I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible for me to disassociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chauri Chura or the mad outrages of Bombay."

It is the characteristic of a saintly mind to exaggerate its own delinquencies and responsibilities. In extreme moods of self-reproach and introspection, a saint would consider all the multitudinous sins of the world as directly attributable to his spiritual shortcoming. It would be the height of unchivalry to distort such outbursts to suit one's political prepossessions.

The main and most beautiful part of Gandhi's written statement is the one where he has narrated how from being a loyal servant of the Crown, he became a non-cooperator. "My public life" said he "began in 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with the British authorities in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and an Indian, I had no rights. On the contrary, I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian. But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of Indians was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. (I thought that) it was possible to gain a status of full equality in the

Empire for my countrymen. My first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against it. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre of Jallianwalla Bag and culminating in crawling orders, public flogging and indescribable humiliations. I discovered too, that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussalmans of India was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the forebodings and grave warnings of friends at the Amritsar Congress, I fought for co-operation, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Musalmans, that the Punjab wrongs would be healed and that the Reforms, inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were marked a new era of hope. But all this hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed; the Punjab crime was whitewashed. I saw too that not only did the Reforms not mark a change of heart but they were only a method of further draining India. I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was, politically and economically."

He then rapidly described the evils of the British Rule and wound up by saying "Holding such a belief I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the (administrative) system; the only course open to you, the Judge and the Assessors, is either to resign your posts and disassociate yourself from evil or to inflict on me the severest penalty."

When the memorable statement was read out, the last act in the drama commenced. The Sessions Judge has been complimented, and very justly, upon his

markedly courteous bearing throughout the trial. His appreciative reference to the greatness of the illustrious accused before him came like soothing balm to those in whose memory the stern reproof of Justice Davar to Lokamanya Tilak was still lingering. In spite of his respectful attitude, however, we cannot but think that the sentence (of six years' simple imprisonment) which the judge passed upon Gandhi was extremely heavy. Would not the ends of justice, even according to his notions have been fully served by a lighter punishment? If at all he wanted a precedent in determining the sentence to be passed upon Gandhi, why should he have gone back to the old days of Justice Davar and Lokamanya Tilak, when the notable trial of the Ali Brothers was both a recent and appropriate precedent?

CHAPTER XVII

THE GOSPEL OF GANDHI

Those who are capable of humility, of justice, of love, of aspiration stand already on a platform that commands the sciences and art, speech and poetry, action and grace. For, whoso dwells in this moral beatitude, already anticipates those special powers which men prize so highly. The heart which abandons itself to the Supreme Mind finds itself related to all its works and will travel a royal road to particular knowledge and powers.

Emerson

THE Gospel of Gandhi must be studied in conjunction with his life. For, it is not a bundle of intellectual ideas unconnected with one another but the rich harvest of a field labouriously ploughed and furrowed and watered with his own heart's blood. Every word is drawn out of *real history*, out of a life "passed through the fire of thought" and action. Gandhi's gospel will stand or fall in proportion as it agrees with or differs from the experiences of the generality of his countrymen. Even supposing it fails to be appreciated, the tragic failure would still be glorious and would do credit to his noble heart. To such a gospel, an intellectual test and analysis are superfluous. Still a sympathetic survey, however brief, may put it in its

real perspective and remove some errors of understanding.

Gandhi has carefully studied the basic elements of Politics, Economics, Sociology, Philosophy and religion. Where he differs from the professional scholar is that while the latter revels in his book-lore and hair-splittings, Gandhi speedily shuts up his book and seeks the development of his views from a living contact with the hard realities of life. His principal book of study is Man and the instrument of knowledge is passionate Love. An abiding trust in God is an Article of Faith with him. So is the ultimate grandeur of Man's destiny. He does indeed admit that there are innumerable things which we do not understand. But the dim light of human intellect has convinced him that Man is created with a purpose; that Life is not a waste but a trial and a preparation; that man was not born to fall, but he has fallen to rise; that good and not evil is the basis of human character; that Love and not Fight is the Law of the universe; that virtue and not its opposite is the nature of Man; that Freedom and not bondage is his natural and legitimate environment and that the the everwatchful Providence is leading Man to his majestic destiny in his own inscrutable way.

Freedom—that is the watch-word of his life. The vague and indefinite ideal planted into his mind by the study of *Gita* and the company of Rajachandra became more and more indefinite and clear as he passed through the trials and tribulations of his South African leadership. With most spiritual natures, the impulse comes purely from personal experiences. The man develops, the ideal expands, the vision soars and the

insight deepens. But there is nothing social and national in all this development. But with Gandhi the case has been different. The quest of political liberty has accelerated his quest of Individual Liberation. Him, the path of Politics has led Godward. Thus it is that the range of his thoughts is not merely confined to the spiritual domain. To the usual class of God-seeking persons, complex questions, on Politics, Reform, Economics do not occur; more, they regard the study of these questions as an unnecessary and profitless diversion. Gandhi not only faces them squarely but holds that the solution of national and inter-national problems is indissolubly bound up with our individual welfare. It is thus that Gandhi is drawn to the solution of these questions. They form part and parcel of himself. He cannot, will not run from them. The world is so, because we are so. If we want to rise, we must needs try to raise the world. How is the world to be raised?

The same impulse that has drawn him to the consideration of the problems of humanity has determined his choice of remedies. If we are individually responsible for the slightest and remotest evil in the community in which we are born and in the humanity of which we form a unit, it behoves us, as we value our religious uplift, to place ourselves right before the face and across the path of that evil. But the very object of removing the evil, being religious, the ways and means must be limited to the spiritual. If individual salvation depends upon a proper obedience to the Ten Commandments, so must the national; there can be no divorce between the two. Politics must be based upon

the Law of Love and nations must be governed according to the noble message of the Sermon on the Mount. The individual soul is the universal soul and the path of elevation of the individual, the nation and of humanity must be identical.

Here comes the difficulty. Napoleon, while on his way to Paris from Elba, had to face a royalist regiment. The officer in charge ordered the soldiers to shoot. It was a critical moment. The Emperor was unarmed, unescorted. Jumping from his carriage, he stood in front of his soldiers, the very picture of quiet and dignity. "If any one of you seeks to kill his late Emperor, here am I, kill me." At once, as if by magic, the soldiers changed their minds and "Vive L'Emperor" testified to the victory of Napoleon. A cynic may ask what the result would have been, had Napoleon been confronted with Austrian or Russian regiments. The path of suffering which is Gandhi's sole panacea for human ills is alright when the political opponent is related to you by ties of blood, race, nationality, sentiment, culture or religion. While Greek meets Greek this path is in one sense easy enough. Gandhi however recognizes no such distinctions. Over and beyond the artificial barriers raised by man, he sees the luminous unity of humanity. Do we not come of the same Divine stock? Are not all children of the same Mother? He does appreciate the difficulties that beset the path. But neither the difficulties nor the interminable suffering they would create scare him away.

Gandhi's conception of the doctrine of Love is responsible for his views on Governments in general. With Tolstoy, he holds that "physical violence is the

bases of authority." He has nothing but contempt even for the Government of England which is supposed to be the model of democracy. He regards Parliament as nothing but the "talking shop of the world" "a costly toy of the nation." He finds that the Politicians taking part therein "are hypocritical and selfish" and "have neither real honesty nor living conscience." The energy of each is "concentrated upon security the success of his party," None cares for the common weal. If these are his views on the "Mother of Parliaments" one can imagine how severely he would condemn others. Even in well-governed countries the "numberless administrators receiving enormous sums gathered from the people" are a fruitful cause of the general impoverishment. The existence of an aristocracy involves the usurpation of the lands of the people and the creation of "a class of absentee landlords" What little the poor can save from these, goes to fill in the coffers of the capitalists. The age of machinery has intensified their hold on the people. To maintain these interests and prevent the poor from resisting their tyranny, standing armies are kept. Judges, Lawers Courts, Police, Prisons—these and many other instruments have been devised with the same object of holding the people down under the hells of despotism. Colonisation, Imperialism are but the prejecting shadows of this despotism enthroned on violence and determined to perpetuate its power under one semblence or other.

While agreeing with Court Leo Tolstoy in this sweeping condemnation of the system of Government, Gandhi realises that before humanity outgrows the present

stage, the individual must be, intellectually and morally of a far higher type than now. He realizes that for several generations to come, concentrated attempts shall have to be made in this direction before there is a reasonable chance of the Golden Age to dawn. But this recognition does not prevent him from laying bare the evils of the system. The system must be condemned, the ideal must be maintained, at all costs.

If the institution of Government has stunted the spiritual growth of man by its explicit and implicit negation of the doctrine of Love, so has the institution of Property. "Property is the root of evil." It is said that slavery has disappeared. But the fact is that "the word only and not the evil, has been abolished." "Wherever there is a man who does not work, not because others willingly and lovingly work for him but because he has the possibility, while not working himself, to make others work for him, there is slavery." Property creates a gulf between man and man and hinders the free working of the Law of Love. But it is exactly towards this object that the activity of all our society is directed. "States and Governments intrigue and make wars for the sake of property; bankers, merchants, manufacturers, landowners, labourers use cunning, torment themselves, torment others for the sake of property; tradesmen, landlords, struggle, deceive, oppress, suffer for the sake of property. Penal servitude, prisons,—all is for the sake of property. The goal of property is luxury—a ceaseless round of feasting and dancing"—demoralizing alike to the rich who enjoy and to the poor at the expense of whose health and happiness it is enjoyed.

The remedy which Socialism has found for this evil does not appeal to Gandhi. "Socialists wish to remove inequality and oppression by assigning all capital to the nation, to humanity so that the centralised unit will become humanity itself. There will be the same mansions, the same gastronomic dinners, sweets, wines, carriages, horses, only everything will be accessible to all. But among persons striving each for his own welfare it would be impossible to find men sufficiently disinterested to manage the capital of humanity without taking advantage of their power—men who would not again introduce into the world inequality and oppression." So the remedy proposed by the Socialists is a mirage, a delusion. Instead of eradicating the evil, it will only increase it.

What then is remedy? This—the glorification of simplicity and poverty over pomp and pelf; it is here that the *chaturvarnya* system comes in. At the top of the Hindu Society comes the class of self-denying pure servants of humanity, the Brahmins. It may be that true Brahminhood has decayed but it has not disappeared. In India pelf and power bow before purity. In Western countries pelf is the centre round which everything moves. Purity is at a discount. The leaders of the society must be pure and god-fearing, religion-loving men and women, persons who by their very presence will shame and restrain all the arrogance and wantonness of lucre. True Brahminhood consists in self-denial, the persistent practice of the vows of *Asteya* and *Aparigraha*. By encouraging the principle of property, political economists might have thought that they made the world more industrious; as a matter

of fact they have brought in pauperism in the train. "Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass nor yet staves for, verily the workman is worthy of his mead," is not only a great religious precept but is the highest principle of economies also. "If only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world and there would be no man dying of starvation." This need not instantly mean the end of all property; it should only result in the voluntary acceptance of poverty on the part of a section of the community and moderate pursuit of wealth on the part of the rest.

Closely allied with the greed of property and mainly the root thereof, is the love of ease and distaste for work and labour especially manual labour. Men and women seek to accumulate wealth partly with the object of not being required to drudge. There are some who hold themselves too superior to work. Then there are kinds of labour which are condemned as te mean. Gandhi makes no such distinction. To him work—exalted or mean—is equally sacred, be it the scrubbing of vessels or the writing of books. Every piece of work honestly done must lift up the worker. The dread of work must be overcome before man can hope to rise morally. If every man or woman is my brother and sister, is it not a sin on my part to condemn them to menial offices while I roll lazily in bed and cushioned chairs? Every man must be his own servant. It is religious duty not to use articles of luxury, articles which grind his sisters and brothers and make them physical wrecks, It is his bounden duty to remove the root cause which condemns thousands of poor to the soul.

destroying machine-dependent and machine-making factories and sends them to an early grave,

This brings us to Gandhi's views on modern industrialism and commercialism. Gandhi is the pronounced enemy of both and realizing that machinery is the centre (basis) of the modern industrialism, he has directed his onslaught upon it. His condemnation of machinery is severe. "It is machinery that has impoverished India, Machinery has begun to desolate Europe ; it represents a great sin. Machinery is like a snake-hole. I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery. What is machinery ? Machinery in its widest sense is a labour-saving device. It is not every labour-saving device that Gandhi is opposed to. When he talks of machinery, he thinks of the huge cotton-producing factories, the desolating railway arrangement and the innumerable engines devised by prostituted human intellect for destroying life in war-times. Such a machinery is an evil which has concentrated capital in a few hands, has created unwieldy unhealthy cities stimulated immoral competition, given enormous impetus to innumerable artificial industries and in general brought about the physical, intellectual and moral degradation of those connected there-with. We do not know Gandhi's detailed views on the application of ordinary machinery to the daily life of the average man or of scientific machinery to the healthy growth of agriculture. His views on machinery are more thorough going than those of Ruskin who did not inveigh against all railways but favoured only main lines for their

"large and obvious utility" and who was opposed to "steam-power" while he tolerated the "natural" agencies of wind, water and animal life. The key to Ruskin's diatribe on machinery is his artistic sense which could not tolerate the sight of the ugliness and squalour coming in the train of machinery. If Ruskin could have by any means saved the harm to nature done by the introduction of machinery, he would not have condemned it. Gandhi's opposition comes from a far higher motive. It is the immorality which machinery breeds that pains and agonizes him and he cannot brook its very last vestige. He would fain save some physical labour of man if that can consistently be done with the integrity and preservation of his morality.

Machinery is not only the symbol of modern Industrialism but of modern European Civilisation as well. What in Europe goes by the name of Civilisation is, in his opinion nothing but a social cancer. He has immense faith in the nobility and vitality of Indian Civilisation. While the Indian Civilisation has fertilized human life, the European Civilisation has brought only desolation in its train. He considers the Europeans themselves as the helpless victims of their own Civilisation. With his faith in the inherent goodness of man, Eastern or Western, Gandhi refuses to believe, that spirituality is the monopoly of the East and that the Western nations are only materialistic. His distinction between the sum total of the culture of Modern Europe and the Ancient India has nothing racial about it. He cannot accept the dictum "East is East and West is West." He holds that present-day Europe by making bodily welfare the goal of man has

degenerated from its pristine purity of outlook. Modern civilisation has concentrated men's intellect upon the increase of material comforts. But the increase of material comforts "does not in any way whatsoever conduce to moral growth" "The soul must languish when we give all our thought to the body." The function of society and civilisation is to help man in the main purpose of life which is "to live rightly, think rightly, act rightly." "Railways, motors, telegraph, telephone, and even the coming flying machines are diverting man's thought from the main purpose of his life." Instead of wanting to "know himself" man is absorbed in pandering to bodily comfort. The "drive and hurry" of modern civilisation leave people neither time nor energy for self-elevation. The system of competition corrodes the moral backbone. The exaltation of intellect leaves no room for the healthy play of sentiment and emotion' as a result neither morality nor religion are cared for. Drifting away from God, man has become a law unto himself and is absorbed in satisfying the cravings of his lower self. Enjoyment being considered the basis of society and the goal of mankind every nation seeks to follow this object by plundering, and defrauding others of their legitimate possessions. This they do by wars Industrialism, commercialism, Imperialism; colonizations—all these are the instruments of pilfering and torturing neighbouring countries. Every country ought to be satisfied with its natural frontiers and its natural resources, Science instead of slaving for the race for wealth, enjoyment and territories, ought to become the hand-maid of religion and morality. Kings instead of being the masters of their

subjects must be their servants. Aristocracy must dig its own grave. Wealth must only be the instrument of mitigating human wants and sufferings. Then only will man be happy and his destiny fulfilled,

Three great waves of revolt against the Western or Modern Civilisation have been witnessed in India during the last fifty years. Of the first, Lokamanya Tilak is the most distinguished spokesman. The second was led by Arabindo Ghose and the third is by Gandhi. The attack of the Lokamanya was directed to the social and religious life of the West, that of Arabindo Ghose to its culture in its broad significance and that of the Mahatma to its civilisation in each and every details. It is necessary to remember that Gandhi's deification of the ancient Aryan civilisation has not come as a natural growth but under circumstances it was inevitably bound to come by way of a reaction and it has all the good points and drawbacks of a reaction. The chief service rendered by Gandhi's gospel lies not so much in the accuracy and completeness of its analysis but in the general tone of its doctrines. The incompleteness of the analysis is also due to the fact that it forms with all its thorough-going negation of the usefulness of the Modern Civilisation, only the back ground of Gandhi's life and activities. With Ruskin, with Tolstoy, their doctrines are the main basis of their activities, the purpose with which they worked their message to posterity, their main contribution to contemporary thought the one thing by which their worth in history will be measured. With Gandhi the case is somewhat different. The only contribution to human history and contemporary thought and politics he would like to take

his stand on is his unique doctrine of *Satyagraha* with its eternal emphasis on love and truth. If the mission of the twentieth century is to transfer political power from Europe to Asia, if in the next eighty or hundred years, the world empire is to be wrested from the puissant arms of Europe by the awakened nations of Asia, then of course, *Satyagraha* with its corollaries of suffering and non-violence will be but a cry in the wilderness. But if the purpose of the next century is the real awakening of the masses all the world over and the overthrow of purely social, religious, industrial, economic tyranny and vested interests as distinguished from political and international strifes and upheavals, probably no weapon will be more potent, more resorted to than the one placed into the hands of humanity by the leader of South African Indians. If the course of future history will be partly the transferring of world power from an exhausted and hopelessly divided Europe to newly awakened Asia and partly a world struggle between the masses and the classes, then Gandhi's weapon will work side by side with all the other ones and it will be proved how while the materialistic weapon bring desolation to the conquerer as well as desolation to the conquered, Gandhi's weapon is thrice-blessed in that it elevates both the tyrants and their victims. If the question is considered from this standpoint we shall have to recognize that the first chapter of *Satyagraha* in World History is yet to be completed.

And because Gandhi is the first modern *Satyagrahi* it is necessary that his gospel should be as elastic as possible so as to make room for immense diversities of

time, place and circumstances. The very incompleteness and shortcomings of his doctrines thus derive fresh significance. Had his views on all the particular problems of humanity—on Socialism for instance—been crystallized, he would not have been the pioneer of twentieth century spiritual movements. He is an idealist, and it is not the business of an idealist to descend to particulars, to give the pros and cons for every minute detail; nor is it his business to compromise, to strike the mean between his lofty message and present-day conditions. That task belongs to the practical legislator, who always follows and never precedes an idealist. We have therefore to remember that Gandhi's views form only the background of his life and main activities, that they come with the intensity inevitable in a reaction against the materialism of the Modern Civilization and that they are the fruit of thought of an intensely spiritual mind ceaselessly bent on pursuing its spiritual and moral progress and hence interested in evaluating every thought, system or institution in terms of the moral standard only to the neglect of any other.

This is at once the strength and weakness of the gospel. In spite of the admitted shortcomings of the Modern European Civilization, it will have to be conceded that it has not only liberated intellect from theological and political bondage but has stimulated its activities to an almost unparalleled extent. It has enthroned Reason. The scientific spirit of European scholars has extended the limits of man's knowledge and power. The secrets of Nature are being laid bare before the searchlight of science. In theory, at least,

European Civilization has deified the position of the masses and made them the rulers of the nation. These and many other achievements of modern Europe will have to be recognized; and the mission of awakened Hindustan and awakened Asia will be to build up a civilization which will combine the noblest elements of the culture of the East and of the West. But before India can undertake that compromise it was necessary to demolish the evil influences and the undue predominance of Western Civilization and Gandhi has successfully completed this work commenced by Lokamanya Tilak and continued by Srj. Arabindo Ghose. That, part of what he has preached will remain unabsorbed goes without saying; it is at once the fate and privilege of all pioneers. That, part of what will be accepted will exist side by side with its opposite also goes without saying; for social institutions are built on compromises and in compromises opposite influences are always huddled together. But the future historian shall have to pay ungrudging tribute to Gandhi for having insistently proclaimed the cardinal moral ideas of Hindu Society and Culture. In the history of great moral and intellectual revolutions, it is not the form which ideas and institutions ultimately take that counts but the propelling force, the impulse they receive from inspired men that deserves the recognition of all. Judged by this test, Gandhi's name will forever be associated with the rejuvenation of Indian culture irrespective of the final acceptance or rejection of many of his thoughts.

CHAPTER XVIII

PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS

ON the 18th of March, Gandhi was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. On Monday, 20th March, he was taken by a special train to Yerawada. A few weeks before he was arrested, he had taken a vow that he would spin every day for at least half an hour. After a slight hesitation, the superintendent of the gaol, probably in obedience to superior orders, placed at Gandhi's disposal his favourite spinning wheel. Throughout the whole of his stay at Yerawada, Gandhi was allowed to spend his time as he liked. He invariably got up at 4 a. m. for prayers and retired at 8 p. m. At 6-30 in the morning he commenced his studies. From 6-30 a. m. to 8 p. m. he worked incessantly. He devoted full six hours to literary and philosophical studies, four to hand-spinning and carding and the remaining three and half hours to miscellaneous duties etc. Gandhi carried the principles of rectitude to the minutest details and observed all jail-regulations most faithfully. Though he knew that "if the whole of the jail-yard were to be dug up twelve inches deep, it would yield many a secret in the shape of spoons,

knives, cigarettes, soaps, etc.," so far as he was concerned he would refuse to borrow a knife from his warder in order to mend his pencil, and would insist on having it through the regular official channel. Every prisoner before the lock-up was daily searched. Gandhi was no exception to the rule, nor did he ever object to or resent the search. But though he was gentility and forgiveness incarnate in such matters, he was ever vigilant where the fundamental rights of a prisoner (or of himself) were invaded and very often in such cases, his intervention has done great good. When Gandhi was locked-up in gaol, after having vaguely hoped for about three months, that India would rise to the occasion, complete the boycott of foreign cloth and unlock the prison-gates, he settled down to studies with the zest of a youth of twenty-four. He mapped out for himself a rigid programme of studies to finish which six years were not enough. In the course of less than two years, he read nearly 150 books. Novels and story-books, songs, dramas, travel-books served perhaps to enhance the zest with which he read the Gita, the Bible, the Upanishads, the Bhagvat, the Mahabharat and the Koran. It is interesting to learn that the Mahatma did not disdain to have a "Trip to the Moon" in the company of Lucien and had no objection to be "Dropped from the clouds" along with Jules Vernes.

The story of Gandhi's release is briefly as follows. Since December 1923, he began to suffer from abdominal pain and derangement in the digestive system. He also began to have low fever every day. When Colonel Maddock, Civil Surgeon at the Sasson Hospital was consulted, he felt convinced that Gandhi was

suffering from appendicitis and for a fuller examination took Gandhi to the hospital. After blood examination etc., it became quite clear that Gandhi was suffering from appendicular abscess of a serious type and that an immediate operation was necessary. Accordingly at 10 p. m. on the same day, an operation was successfully performed. The aid of the medical science, the care of his friends and relatives, together with his own vitality enabled Gandhi to rapidly regain his health. The Government of Bombay received medical advice that Gandhi should be removed to the sea-side for a prolonged period of convalescence. So the Government decided it best to remit unconditionally the unexpired portion of Gandhi's sentence. Accordingly, on February 5th 1924, Gandhi became a free man!

The release of Gandhi was most welcome to the nation. It seemed as if, his magical influence would heal all political and communal differences and make India again strong and united. Gandhi himself was under no such delusion. "Though I know," he said "very little of the present situation, I know sufficient to enable me to see that perplexing as the national problems were at the time of the Bardoli resolutions, they are far more perplexing to-day. The communal unity which I fondly believed in 1922 to have been nearly achieved, I observe, suffered a serious set-back." He felt that like Napoleon he was entitled to ask his colleagues & followers, "where is that glorious India, I left in 1921? I gave you unity; I find nothing but disunity! I left the country throbbing with patriotism and expectation; now I find nothing but lassitude and inertia! when I left you, the Government was afraid of the Congress and its leaders; now they can openly defy us!"

February, March, April and May were spent by Gandhi in recuperation and the suburb of Juhu easily became a place of political pilgrimage. Gandhi had kept his mind, eyes and ears open and he was trying to study the political situation. He freely allowed his mind to be acted upon, both by the No-changers as well as by the Pro-changers. With the bias of his mind in favour of 'no change', the No-changers influenced him most. Pandit Motilal Nehru came down from Allahabad to spend a month at Juhu, to improve his health as well as to carry political conversations with Gandhi. And he was soon joined by Mr. Das. In spite of the anxiety of both the parties to arrive at an agreement, differences of opinion began to be discovered as fundamental. Gandhi admitted that there was no doubt that the Swarajists had made a stir in the Government circles, and that believing as they did in giving battle to the Government in the Assembly and the Councils, they had no reason whatsoever for withdrawing from the legislatures. Indeed, he went so far as to say that the withdrawal of the Swarajists could only add to the general depression in the country and strengthen the hands of the Government which wanted to give, nothing to justice.

When Messrs. Das and Nehru asked him to advise them as regards their Council Programme, Gandhi replied that they knew their business best. When Panditji unfolded his programme and asked what he thought of it, he expressed his general approval. But strangely enough, he fought shy of the word 'Obstruction.' Speaking for himself he said that if he entered the Councils, he would, without following a general

policy of obstruction endeavour to strengthen the constructive programme of the Congress by making cloth purchase in Khaddar and by imposing a prohibitive duty on foreign cloth.

he idea of Gandhi throughout all these discussions seemed to be to ratify the permissive resolution in favour of Council-Entry but to monopolize the whole Congress machinery for himself and other no-changers. He held that the only reason why Constructive Programme was unsuccessful was the disunity in the Congress Executives. Messrs. Das and Nehru assured Gandhi that they too had faith in the constructive programme and so there could be no impediment to efficiency. The idea that the constructive programme should be worked by the no changers through Congress executives and by the pro-changers through the councils was based on a false presumption that the Pro-changers would not be able to support it through the Congress executives. Then Gandhi explained to them the meaning of Non-co-operation. Messrs Das and Nehru declared that they too were ardent Non-co-operators. "I retain the opinion" Gandhi said "that council entry is inconsistent with Non-co-operation. Nor is this difference a mere matter of interpretation but relates to the essential mental attitude." Messrs Das and Nehru declared "we fail to understand how such an entry can be regarded as inconsistent with the doctrine of the Non-co-operation resolution of the Nagpur Congress. But if Non-co-operation is more a matter of mental attitude than of the application of a living principle to the existing facts of our national life, with special reference to the varying attitude of the Bureaucratic Government which rules

that life, we conceive it to be our duty to sacrifice even Non-co-operation to serve the real interests of our country. In our view, the principle includes self-reliance in all our activities which make for the healthy growth of the nation and resistance to the bureaucracy as it impedes our progress towards Swaraj." And so they decided to "introduce all resolutions, measures and bills which are necessary for the healthy growth of our national life and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy." "If the constructive work of the Congress came within the principle of Non-co-operation, no less did these suggestions (of Gandhi) although they represented the constructive activity within the legislative bodies."

In Gandhi's opinion, the efficiency of Congress organisations was greatly hampered by the presence in them of persons who did not heartily support the majority view of the Congress. He therefore proposed that while the minority was welcome to remain in the Congress, they should surrender all the executive seats to the Non-changers. In a word, he wanted the Swarajists to resign their memberships of all Congress Executives including the A. I. C. C. At the Ahmedabad Session of the A. I. C. C. it was pointed out to Gandhi that if his views were logically carried out, more than three-fourths of the Congress organisations will have to be closed for want of officers who have been successfully carrying on the five boycotts. Secondly what Gandhi had overlooked was that the differences of opinion in the Congress organisations were but the microcosm of the differences raging over in the country. The constructive work was hampered not by the former but by the latter.

But Gandhi was bent on testing his theory. The introduction of the compulsory spinning franchise for Congress membership and the fulfilment of the five boycotts before election of the member to the Congress Executive, —these were the means by which Gandhi wanted to try his strength with the Swarajists. And he failed not to hint that these were the conditions on which alone he would agree to lead the country. Perhaps Gandhi felt that after a severe wordy fight Messrs Das and Nehru might give in. The Swarajists leaders plainly pointed out to him how it was manifestly unfair for the majority to allow the minority to go to the councils by means of a permissive resolution and then turn upon them and drive them out of the Congress because they had gone to the councils. But Gandhi would not yield. When however, Messrs Das and Nehru left the house in protest and were followed by nearly half the house, he felt the necessity of retracing his steps.

In his efforts to tackle the delicate question of Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhi was equally unfortunate. "For me" he said "the only question for immediate solution is the Hindu-Muslim question. I believe in the immediate possibility of achieving it, because it is so natural so necessary. If the Hindus set their house in order Islam will respond in a manner worthy of its past liberal traditions. The key to the situation lies with the Hindus. We must shed timidity or cowardice. We must be brave enough to trust and all will be well."

The most notable attempt made by Gandhi to bring the two communities nearer was his historic fast of twenty-one days. That this silent and pathetic appeal failed to bring about unity is now known to all. To

Gandhi himself the fast was a process of purification. If he felt satisfied that he had thereby purified himself ever so little, his fast was successful. In this twentieth century it is hardly possible that the physical tortures even of the saintliest of men should so permanently alter the whole natural outlook and selfish tendencies of crores of people that they should give up all quarrels and disputes. But this recognition does not deter him from seeking to increase his spiritual power. "There, was a time" said Gandhi "when God had put effect in my words and both Hindus and Mussalmans had listened to me and carried out my wishes. I find that my words have lost their power, which to me means that there is something wrong with me and God has deserted me. I am fasting and praying that God may come back to me and restore effect to my words."

While the country was deliberating over the fast and the resolutions of the Unity Conference, the Viceroy threw a political bomb-shell over the country by arresting a number of patriotic Bengalis under Regulation III of 1818 and a new Ordinance specially promulgated. The immediate objective of the new Ordinance was "undoubtedly the dismemberment of the Bengal Swaraj Party which had brought about complete discomfiture of the Government of that province and shown up Lord Lytton as a complete failure." "Once the Party is laid low in Bengal, they expect general demoralisation to follow." But Mr. Das was not a man to take this challenge lying down. In a fiery speech at the Calcutta Corporation he said "If a bomb was thrown anywhere or a pistol fired, we are accustomed to cry out 'It is a dastardly outrage.' But the time has come to

condemn not only the violence of the people, but also the violence of the Government. To be taken into custody without being told what evidence there is and without being brought to justice according to the laws of the land is a denial of the primary rights of humanity. This is a lawless law. They suppress the people who fight for their liberty in a legitimate manner. They suppress or try to suppress lawful organisations. And what is the result? Revolutionary crime is increased. I suggest to the Government, and if God spares me for a few years more, I shall prove it to demonstration that these repressive laws, these lawless laws are incapable of putting down revolutionary crime. They have not succeeded in the past and they will not succeed in the future."

The most welcome result of this repression was the 'joint agreement' signed by Messrs Gandhi, Das and Nehru. In this agreement the Congress was recommended formally to "suspend the programme of Non-co-operation as the national programme except in so far as it related to the refusal to use or wear cloth made out of India." This, none-too-early declaration succeeded in putting the "Swarajists on a par with the No-change.s" and tended to unite all those political parties which had left the Congress to once more join it. But what Gandhi gave with one hand, he took away with another by insisting on restricting the congress membership to direct or indirect contributors of 2000 yards per month of evenly spun yarn and on compulsory Khadi dress. But the leaders of the other schools of thought, though they could not join the congress on these terms, patriotically joined in condemning the arrests, the ordinance and the Regulation.

The Belgaum Congress of 1924 was presided over was Mahatma Gandhi. Excepting long continued and never-ending discussion on the yarn-franchise and the Joint Agreement, no other very contentious subject occupied its attention. Who could have thought, one year before that Gandhi would be released and that he would preside over the deliberations of the Congress. In-inscrutable are the ways of Providence and so far as Gandhi is concerned, this inscrutability is almost uniformly accompanied by grace which is the spiritual synonyme of the word good fortune !

In spite of several difficulties, Gandhi has lived an exceptionally fortunate life. He is fortune's favoured child—thank God he is not Fortune's spoilt child. Looking through the vicissitudes through which he has passed, the trials and temptations that lay across his path, who will not say that God actually pulled him when at the brink of every precipice ? Every time that sin or misdirection sought to decoy him, God who works through 'accidents', gave him his hand and literally pulled him out of the mire. The awakening of the sense of holiness and of the instinct of purity together with their preservation in initial struggles and growth in later life has enabled Gandhi, in the absorption of worldly activities, to keep his character and develop saintliness. And just as it was a series of 'accidents' that preserved his moral fibre, so also it was another series of 'accidents' that drew him, always inspite of himself into the vortex of politics. And this individual struggle for spiritual freedom and this public struggle for national freedom, acting and interacting has made that marvellous life which is the subject matter of this volume !

Who will not say that in that life the saint has supported and cheered the politician and that the politician has brought world-fame to the aspirant for spiritual freedom ?

